



North is North & South is South

Many leaders of
industrialized nations
now support the idea of a
New International Economic Order.

Reagan is not among them.

Writers' Rites

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THE INSIDE STORY



Feed the world, deplete the nation

By Thomas Brom

SAN FRANCISCO

A classic case of overproduction on U.S. farms this fall has government officials looking like the sorcerer's apprentice, trying to hold back an army of runaway producers cash cropping for the global market. Only in America does the government greet news of record wheat, corn, rice and cotton harvests with dismay, knowing that all that food and fiber must be sold for the nation's agricultural system to stay solvent.

U.S. trade representative William Brock recently concluded negotiations in Moscow that could lead to the sale of 23 million metric tons of corn and wheat to the Russians in the next year—the largest grain purchases ever by the USSR. Agriculture Secretary John Block also ordered a resumption of U.S. grain storage and a 15 percent restriction on 1982 wheat planting to reduce the surplus.

Meanwhile San Francisco mayor Dianne Feinstein was in Shanghai attempting to negotiate a cotton export deal with the People's Republic of China. The port of San Francisco announced it would be constructing a cotton quay near China Basin, where clipper ships bound for the Orient once lined the old wooden finger piers. Oakland's containerized port across the Bay now ships more bales of cotton—most of it to Chinese textile mills—than any other U.S. city. Officials there say new cranes on the outer harbor will expand capacity still more, blunting any inroads from the San Francisco operation.

Since the early '70s, the U.S. has encouraged capital-intensive farm production at home by developing foreign markets. Last year about two-thirds of the rice crop, three-fifths of the soybeans, half the wheat, two-fifths of the cotton, a third of the tobacco and a quarter of the corn was shipped overseas. Total farm exports reached 167 million metric tons in fiscal 1981, worth more than \$46 billion. The Agriculture Department estimates that the percentage of total cultivated land in the U.S. devoted to exports will rise from 79 percent in 1970 to 90 percent by 1985.

The problem, apparent in Secretary Block's desperation to sell or store this year's massive grain harvest, is that global markets are extremely volatile and difficult to manage. This year, for instance, high interest rates and the related strong position of the dollar are making U.S. exports too expensive for many countries. Producing for world demand also raises the price of food on the domestic market—a lesson most of us learned when bread prices tripled after the huge Soviet wheat deal of 1972.

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In addition, a growing number of agricultural economists are looking at the domestic costs of these global farms—erosion of topsoil, mining of ground water, increased use of pesticides, depletion of energy reserves and the wholesale export of small farm populations to the city.

"As in much of the third world," concludes author Frances Moore Lappe of the Institute for Food and Development Policy in San Francisco, "the U.S. is promoting production for export as a solution to structural economic problems, neglecting the social and ecological costs of the strategy."

The deficits turn up elsewhere.

A decade ago the big customers for U.S. food were industrialized nations with less land or colder climates—Japan, the Netherlands, West Germany, Canada and the Soviet Union. But the export push, lubricated by easy credit terms and food "aid" programs, soon targeted the population centers of the third world.

Mexico and China now rank second and third behind the Japanese in U.S. food imports, each with nearly \$3 billion in agricultural purchases. South Korea alone buys 20 percent of the U.S. rice crop, joining Taiwan in the \$1 billion club for U.S. farm imports. Egypt—the largest recipient of U.S. food aid—is expected to buy more than \$1 billion in grains by 1983, with India joining the list not long after.

"Within the Department of Agriculture, the foreign agriculture service is now the dominant force," says agricultural economist Phil LaVeen, director of Public Interest Economics West. "Export sales helped pull this country out of the 1973-74 recession—but they also forced up the cost of food to the point where people were boycotting supermarkets."

U.S. agribusiness is quick to defend this export strategy as sound economic policy. In a report titled "U.S. Farm Export Strategies for the 1980s," the Agriculture Council of America defended a program directed at third world "take-off" countries with high growth rates:

"Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Nigeria, East Asia, North Africa and the Middle East are projected to increase their demand for most agricultural commodities and products," the report concluded, "and will experience even greater increases in demand for animal protein and related foodstuffs."

The surplus of agricultural exports over imports—about \$23 billion last year—is celebrated as proof that the strategy is working to offset chronic American balance-of-payment deficits. But a number of agricultural experts, among them LaVeen and Jim Wessell of the Institute for Food and Development Policy, strongly disagree.

"Pushing agriculture to the limits in the U.S. produces a long list of hidden costs," Wessell says. "The energy consumed to produce farm exports cuts that \$23 billion surplus virtually in half. In addition, we are depleting the Great Plains groundwater supply at an alarming rate and eroding the soil in the critical Corn Belt states."

A Department of Agriculture report released this summer found that "each year, water causes about 1.9 billion tons of soil to erode from the nation's cropland. On 94 million acres (nearly one-fourth of the total), soil loss exceeds levels at which production can be sustained indefinitely."

John Timmons, agricultural economist at Iowa State University, concludes, "We are, in effect, exporting our soil and water quality in the form of food and feed grain exports."

Wessell is directing a farm export project at the Institute that will define the hidden costs of promoting agricultural commodities overseas. "One of the keys to the export strategy is getting countries strung out on a meat-centered diet," he says. "Two-thirds of grain exports go to feed animals—not people."

In Japan, for example, the calories accounted for by meat in the national diet jumped from virtually zero 30 years ago to 20 percent in 1980. The USDA assisted the change in Japanese tastes by sponsoring feed grain campaigns.

But feeding grain to cattle is a tremendous waste of protein—a discovery that prompted the Institute's founder, Frances Moore Lappe, to write *Diet for a Small Planet* a decade ago. "The earth simply cannot supply most people with grain-fed meat," she testified before a congressional subcommittee in July. "It would require twice as many acres as are cultivated in the world today."

More immediate consequences of the export strategy include the concentration of landholdings in the U.S. by capital-intensive farmers, and the shifting of labor-intensive specialty crops such as fruits and vegetables to Mexico and the Caribbean where wages are low. The Agriculture Department estimates that the total number of farms in the U.S. will decline by a quarter to 1.8 million by the end of the decade, and the largest 3 percent will account for nearly 60 percent of all cash sales.

Already the U.S. imports about 50 cents for every one dollar of agricultural exports, undercutting much of the justification for the export strategy. Fruits, nuts and vegetables—much of them from Mexico—were the third largest farm import in 1979.

"In California, we're slowly substituting grain for vegetables," says Phil LaVeen. "That process will increase as water prices for irrigation go up, and as the quality of the soil declines in the San Joaquin Valley from overuse."

LaVeen's most recent work focuses on the effect of U.S. cash cropping on domestic food prices. In *Toward a New Food Policy*, he concludes that government action to increase world demand for U.S. farm products will produce domestic inflation, not prosperity for farmers.

"The integration of U.S. agriculture into the world economy has greatly increased the risk of large, unpredictable swings in demand," he says. "U.S. farmers are still wracked by unstable prices, but with greater highs and lows."

Meanwhile, the big grain traders make money no matter what happens by playing the spread of prices from market to market. The only benefit U.S. farmers get from the export push is higher land values—and that is pricing the next generation of farmers right into the cities."

LaVeen and Wessell see no short-term method of changing the U.S. food export strategy. "The only solution to the present overproduction crisis is world recession," LaVeen comments, "a repeat of the 1973-74 downturn when all the capitalist nations faltered at once. That would bring domestic interest rates and prices down, but would do nothing for the structural problems of U.S. agriculture."

Jim Wessell adds, "You really can't do much to the present export system without contravening the whole process of capital accumulation. But we're sitting on a time bomb—the natural resource implication of the present policies are truly frightening. When it's clear that the export push of U.S. crops is costing too much, people will react."

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IN THESE TIMES

Reagan to the nuclear rescue

By Mark Hertsgaard

WASHINGTON

IN THE clearest expression yet of his determination to resurrect nuclear power, President Reagan last week issued a major nuclear policy statement that left industry executives overjoyed and drew sharp criticism from safe-energy advocates.

The president's Oct. 8 statement called nuclear power "essential" to future U.S. energy needs and pledged to slash through "the morass of [government] regulations" that was "forcing many utilities to rule out nuclear power as a source of new generating capacity."

Reagan's statement was but the most recent example of a new unity of purpose and approach that has not existed between Washington and the nuclear power industry since the days of the Nixon presidency and the old Atomic Energy Commission. Nuclear power is the only major program the Reagan administration completely spared during its campaign to reduce federal spending. The administration lobbied hard this spring for \$240 million to continue Tennessee's Clinch River breeder reactor and allocated a whopping \$500 million to advance breeder research. To increase U.S. manufacturers' share of the global reactor market, the administration boosted money for the Export-Import Bank, and, more importantly, greatly eased restrictions on the proliferation of reactor exports.

Reagan's attempted rescue effort comes at a time when the nuclear industry is in such deep commercial trouble that many observers question whether it can ever be revived. U.S. electric utilities have placed virtually no orders for new nuclear reactors since 1974. The problems causing the order slump—public fear and opposition, reduced electricity demand and soaring nuclear plant construction costs—have been getting steadily worse, especially since the Three Mile Island accident of March 1979. Wall Street support for nuclear power has faltered. Three and fourfold cost overruns are now common for nuclear power plants, and many investors fear that utilities may be unable to repay the hundreds of millions of extra dollars they have been forced to borrow to finish construction.

Nor have American reactor vendors been able to cover their losses through overseas sales. Stiff competition from France and West Germany, combined with the Carter administration's restrictions on nuclear exports for nonproliferation reasons, deprived Westinghouse and General Electric of approximately \$9 billion in nuclear orders during the second half of the '70s.

Perhaps most ominous of all for the nuclear industry, business and media institutions that traditionally have strongly supported nuclear energy are beginning to reconsider their positions. Though *Business Week*, the *New York Times* and other powerful shapers of American public opinion are still essentially friends of nuclear power, they are now willing to criticize it vigorously on both safety and economic grounds. And *Energy Future*, the study by the Harvard Business School Energy Project, demolished one of the industry's main arguments when it charged that "nuclear power offers no solution to the problem of America's growing dependence on imported oil." The Harvard study even concluded that investments in conservation and solar energy would produce far more jobs, economic growth and national security.

Faster, faster.

Nevertheless, if anything can save the ailing nuclear industry, it is the Reagan revival plan. When the president announced his nuclear policy last week, he provided industry executives with what they have

long claimed they needed more than anything else: a strong presidential endorsement of the safety and necessity of nuclear power, along with policies designed to insure that nuclear energy potential is realized.

Reagan's statement mimicked industry claims that nuclear power is essential to U.S. national security and economic prosperity and that nuclear's many problems are largely due to overregulation by the government. It did not even mention the Three Mile Island accident. But it did call for "streamlining" the plant-licensing process—a euphemism for slashing safety regulations and reducing legal opportunities for citizen intervention so that nuclear plants can be built faster and more cheaply. Nuclear Regulatory Commission chair Nunzio Palladino hopes his agency will approve operating licenses for 33 nuclear reactors by 1983, in what Palladino calls "an unprecedented pace of licensing."

Reagan also lifted the indefinite ban the Carter and Ford administrations had

placed on the commercial reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. This is a first step toward solving the most serious immediate problem facing the industry: the prospect that some utilities will have to shut down their nuclear reactors as early as 1983 because they have no more room to store the reactor's spent fuel.

All previous attempts by private companies to provide reprocessing services have been commercial failures. For that reason the administration may decide to guarantee purchase of all commercially reprocessed plutonium—an indirect federal subsidy that may ultimately be worth many millions of dollars. Energy Secretary James Edwards, who actually delivered the Reagan statement, was pressed repeatedly by reporters to confirm or deny reports that the administration planned to use the plutonium for nuclear-weapons production. Edwards admitted the idea was in the "controversial" stage but maintained no decision had yet been reached.

Finally, the Reagan statement reaf-

firmed the administration's support for the Clinch River breeder, and directed Secretary Edwards to "proceed swiftly" toward building a nuclear waste repository. The president said it was essential to "demonstrate...the problem of nuclear waste can be resolved." Industry opinion polls identify waste disposal as the public's major concern about nuclear power.

The big gamble.

There are great political risks and costs to implementing such an unabashedly pro-nuclear policy in the '80s. Will it work? As long as the president is the one who takes the political heat generated by pushing for faster plant licensing and a "solution" to nuclear waste disposal, Congress will probably quietly go along with him. Most members of Congress accept, at least implicitly, the industry claim that Three Mile Island shows just how safe nuclear power really is.

Antinuclear lobbyists argue that Reagan's licensing speedup will backfire because it makes another major reactor accident inevitable. This is a gamble Reagan seems prepared to take. If he wins it, he cuts nuclear construction costs, reverses nuclear power's economic

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Despite widespread community opposition, the still-intact Unit One reactor may be back in operation next month.



Will TMI startup reassure investors?

By David Spurr

HARRISBURG, PA

WHEN THREE MILE Island closed down its reactors after the worst nuclear accident in history, many people living near the plant thought it would stay shut until its safety problems were solved and the radioactive mess from the accident was cleaned up. But with the plant's parent company perilously close to a bankruptcy that could threaten the nuclear industry as a whole, it now appears likely that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) will soon allow Three Mile Island to restart its still-intact Unit One reactor.

The reactor could begin operating as soon as next month, despite new fears about its safety and the lack of any concrete plan to finance the cleanup of the still-damaged and highly radioactive

Unit Two reactor.

For the last 12 months the NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board has held a series of often-emotional hearings on whether to allow Three Mile Island to resume operation of Unit One—the reactor that survived the 1979 accident but was shut down indefinitely at the insistence of Pennsylvania governor Dick Thornburgh. Their recommendation to the NRC's five-member board of commissioners is expected some time in November. But despite heated local opposition and a cheating scandal that has cast doubt on the competence of Three Mile Island management, few people close to the issue believe that the NRC will force the nuclear reactor to stay idle. The stakes are just too high.

While the NRC hearings were being conducted on the ground floor of a parking garage here, Wall Street financiers were warning a congressional committee in Washington that bankruptcy for General Public Utilities (GPU), the owner of Three Mile Island, would harm not only

the entire nuclear industry but even those utilities that rely solely on fossil fuels. Put simply, GPU's problems are making it difficult for all other utilities to raise capital.

Testifying before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Conservation last summer, representatives of the New York securities firm of Rothschild, Unterberg, Towbin said that GPU's inability to finance the cleanup of Unit Two and to restart Unit One was already discouraging investments in utility companies. They told the members of Congress that Three Mile Island's idleness had already cost hundreds of millions of dollars in "risk premiums" on long-term borrowing for utilities, according to their survey of 30 debt offerings since the nuclear accident. They added that if GPU is forced into bankruptcy, the cost of capital borrowing for utility companies would go even higher.

In a report to major lending and banking institutions prior to the congressional testimony, the same securities firm warned of the "severe implications" of bankruptcy for GPU, and called for more support of the beleaguered company from the country's 200 utilities. Rothschild's concerns match those of chairman William G. Kuhns, who has repeatedly urged the restart of Unit One as a condition for his company's survival.

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INSHORT

Scenes from a Congress

On the next page, David Moberg and James Cusick address some of the practical questions raised at the American Writers Congress in New York. But at a party on the second night of the gathering, the lead singer of a group called The Must wondered aloud about some of the intangibles, asking, "Are you writers of America ready for love?" By that time, the writers bopping around the Soho dance club seemed to be ready for anything, having spent two days coping with overflow crowds in panel after panel—Congress organizers had expected 2,000 to sign up for the event, but ended up being swamped by 3,000 registrants.

The atmosphere was less hectic at an ad hoc discussion loosely moderated by Studs (Hard Times) Terkel and Calvin (Floater) Trillin. At that session, Sidney Zion—formerly a newspaper reporter, now the saloonkeeper of Broadway Joe's—observed that the dailies are boring because no editor ever got fired for "spiking" (killing) a possible controversial story, while plenty of writers have been fired for writing one. Later in the day, Lila Garrett, now very gainfully employed as a writer of sitcom pilots ("I could afford a wonderful divorce"), remembered when things weren't going so well for her ("I would have gone into cardiac arrest, but I couldn't afford it"). Not surprisingly, writers tended to sound like their particular genre: cartoonists were jovial, novelists were visionary and academics were—well...

Write! Rewrite! Action!

At the screenwriting workshop, Andrew Bergman, writer and director of the current release *So Fine*, offered a blunt definition of a completed screenplay: "a document meant to be read by a studio executive." Even as a successful screenwriter, Bergman said, "you're still in the position of bearing children and putting them up for adoption." James (Nicholas and Alexandra) Goldman suggested that writers cherish the time spent working on a screenplay, "because once you hand the script in, then they [the execs] have you." Rewrites are the least of your worries.

Bergman came the closest to defending the movie industry by saying that its members were no crazier, greedier or dumber than their counterparts in publishing and academia. To which moderator Nora (Crazy Salad) Ephron shook her head in disagreement. "Wrong, wrong, wrong," she moaned.

The good old days

Earlier this fall, as a group of writers met weekly to hammer out the basic machinery for forming a union, an organizer of the Writers Congresses of '35 and '37 looked back on the early days of the American Newspaper Guild (now simply the Newspaper Guild). Back in the early '30s, Paul Romaine was a Guild organizer in Milwaukee when journalists at the Wisconsin News went on strike to get the Guild recognized as a union. The strikers' victory—coming after six months of clashes with strike-breaking goons and the police—was all the more significant because the News was a Hearst paper.

"No one thought the newspapermen could be organized," Romaine recalled. "You know how newspapermen are—independent, jealous, competitive—even on the same goddamn newspaper. But the strike was a real struggle, and you learn doing struggles, no matter what kind of worker you are. All you have to do is get confronted a few times by the police or the status quo, or get hit over the head once or twice by a club, and you've had a tremendous lesson in the class struggle."

'Twas the final conflict

Romaine remembers when Ernest Hemingway "came all the way from Spain to speak against fascism" at the First Writers Congress in '35. Hemingway clearly wasn't comfortable at the podium—"he was sweating like one of his bulls." (Romaine frequently corresponded with Hemingway, and in one letter he urged the author of *The Sun Also Rises* to employ fewer bulls and more politics in his fiction. "When you sweep the streets," Hemingway wrote back, "don't give advice to the horses.")

Romaine chaired the plenary session of the Second Writers Congress in '37, at which a small group of writers led by James T. (Studs Lonigan) Farrell made a motion to raise the proletarian banner by singing the "Internationale." Romaine, himself a Communist but dedicated to a "united front," was thrilled when like-minded participants rejected the motion on the grounds that it would alienate non-leftists. "That showed the consciousness of the writers present—how united they were against war and fascism. It was a very good sign."

In retrospect, Romaine says, organizing drives among writers in that period had mixed results. "But if for no other reason, it was important to bring physically these writers together to rub elbows."

Times have changed—the forbidding blank page is being replaced by a blank VDT screen—but despite their various misgivings, it seemed that most of the writers leaving the cramped quarters of the Roosevelt Hotel this past Oct. 11 were also glad that they had rubbed elbows together.

—Josh Kornbluth

The extended, two-page "In Short" section will appear next week, with a roundup of grassroots events and a "briefing" on nukes.



Dr. Herbert Ushewokunze, Zimbabwe's former health minister, condemned the distribution of Depo-Provera in his country, noting that "white women do not use it."

Made in the U.S.A., but sold to women in Africa

The international women's health movement won a major victory this summer when the government of Zimbabwe banned a dangerous contraceptive called Depo-Provera. Zimbabwe's ban is already being felt across Africa, stirring debate in Kenya over the safety and advisability of the drug.

Depo-Provera is a long-lasting, injectable contraceptive manufactured by the Michigan-based Upjohn Corporation. It can cause heavy bleeding, weight gain, headaches, nervousness and depression. More serious risks include infertility, diabetes and cancers of the breast, the cervix and the uterine lining. The drug has never been approved for use as a contraceptive in the U.S.

Depo-Provera is administered by injection once every three months. "It totally eliminates control on the part of the women," says Judy Norsigian, a member of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, an American group that supplied the Zimbabwean government with evidence of the drug's harmful effects.

This past summer, Zimbabwe's minister of health, Dr. Herbert Ushewokunze, banned it from use in Zimbabwe, and denounced the discriminatory distribution of the drug. "It is racism," he said. "White women do not use it." (Ushewokunze was dismissed from his post this month by Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, for reasons that the Zimbabwean embassy in Washington was unable to provide.)

Somewhere between 90,000 and 100,000 women were using Depo in Zimbabwe when the drug was banned, according to John Paul James, population adviser for the Africa bureau of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). That was about 8.5 percent of all Zimbabwean women of reproductive age, and represented about 1 percent of all users of the contraceptive worldwide.

The Boston Women's Health Book Collective got involved when its contacts in Salisbury heard that "a decision was being made" on the issue, Norsigian says. "They telegraphed us, and we sent material directly to the minister of health. His press releases had statements taken directly from our material."

Kenya quickly picked up on the controversy. "Depo-Provera: Women not guinea-pigs," ran the headline for an editorial in *The Standard*, one of Nairobi's two daily papers.

The promotion of Depo-Provera by international "aid" agencies has been evident in both the Zimbabwe and Kenya cases. Michael Sogi, African regional director of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), declared at an IPPF regional conference on July 23 in Nairobi that Depo-Provera is "safe and reliable." And AID took a futile pro-Depo-Provera stance in Zimbabwe.

"The official position of international agencies on Depo-Provera is not necessarily scientific nor well-informed," Zimbabwe's then-health minister Ushewokunze said in July. "It clearly reflects the political orientation, male dominance and perhaps undue influence of the pharmaceutical industry at policy-making levels."

[A longer version of this article first appeared in Multinational Monitor.]

—Matthew Rothschild

When no news was bad news

"According to our records, you received 86 rems during 1 March 54 to 17 May 54." Donald Baker, one of 28 U.S. service personnel monitoring weather conditions on Rongerik Atoll in the Marshall Islands during the 1954 BRAVO hydrogen-bomb

test, recently received this alarming information from the Air Force. Then a Defense Department document revealed that 39 military personnel had been exposed to between 25 and 98 rems during hydrogen-bomb tests in the '50s, and that the 28 Rongerik airmen were included in that group. The document also stated that of the 220,000 veterans acknowledged to have participated in the nuclear tests, the Rongerik military personnel received by far the largest dose of radiation.

Baker's exposure to 86 rems is more than 150 times larger than the annual dose currently allowed to the public under federal regulations—one-half rem per person. But he and the other former Rongerik service personnel believe they received an even higher dose, because while they worked unprotected outside the weather station buildings, the film badges that recorded their 86-rem exposure remained indoors on their unworn fatigue jackets.

With an estimated yield of 15 megatons—1,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb—BRAVO remains the largest bomb any nation has ever exploded. It was one of several hydrogen bombs tested in the Marshall Islands between 1952 and 1958.

BRAVO was detonated at 6:45 a.m. on March 1, 1954, on Bikini Island, about 130 miles west and upwind of Rongerik. The military personnel on Rongerik watched the sky brighten like a premature sunrise in the west and felt an enormous shock wave that blew out most of the windows of their prefabricated weather-station buildings.

Then particles of radioactive fallout began to descend from the sky. After nearly two days of slogging through the accumulated fallout, inhaling radioactive particles and ingesting contaminated food and water, the men were evacuated and taken to a military base on another atoll for emergency treatment. The 236 Marshallese on adjacent atolls to Bikini were similarly evacuated.

The 28 military personnel from Rongerik were given medical examinations, and shortly thereafter were reassigned to regular duty on the mainland. As veterans, they were forgotten for more than two decades until the National Association of Atomic Veterans (NAAV) recently located them.

The Veterans Administration and the Defense Department deny a relationship between the 86-rem radiation dose and the continuing ill-health of all these veterans, who have had ailments ranging from severe headaches to skin tumors but have been denied VA benefits. On Oct. 27, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) will conduct hearings on the plight of the Rongerik veterans and others who have been exposed to atomic tests.

—Saul Rigberg and Glenn Alcalay

Original articles, news clips, memos, press releases, reports, anecdotes—send them all to "In Short," c/o In These Times, 1509 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60622. Please include your address and phone number.

IN THE NATION

WRITERS CONGRESS

United—at least for one busy weekend

By David Moberg & James Cusick

NEW YORK

THERE ARE FEW MODERN FABLES more beloved than the story of the starving poet in the garret, dying of consumption—or killing herself in despair, leaving behind the sheaf of poems later declared genius.

But novelist Toni Morrison, author of *Tar Baby* and *Sula*, told the overflow opening night crowd at the first American Writers Congress on Columbus Day weekend that "we have to stop loving our horror stories. Misery does not vali-

and a smorgasbord of other topics determined to become a movement—let alone a heroic one—is problematic. But they took numerous steps that could make it possible.

The Congress overwhelmingly endorsed the principle of forming a writers union, and an organizing committee for the union, meeting during the conference, set up its initial structure. For the first time, representatives of some 22 writers' organizations, both local and national, sat down and talked with each other and even urged the development of a closer alliance. And the American Writers Congress set itself up as a continuing organization, though it is not entirely

more concentrated. The five largest trade book publishers now account for 32 percent of all sales, and the four largest bookstore chains, which had 12 percent of the market eight years ago, now have 40 percent.

Yet the publishing arms of huge corporations do retain a certain independence. No one could muster any clear cases of conglomerate suppression of left-wing or innovative books, despite suspicions that such decisions are made in subtle ways. But the firms are under pressure to jump the corporate profit hurdle. An editor at Random House (now in the publishing stable of the Newhouse chain) said that as far as he knew Mr. Newhouse was only involved indirectly in the book division; at the end of the year he wanted to know if he had made as much on his investment there as he would have investing in Treasury certificates or whatever.

There's just no way that a publishing house can meet that kind of test, an editor from Norton, an independent firm, protested. But they try. "What

they're looking for is books that sell," Faith Sale, an editor at G.P. Putnam's noted.

That's nothing new, but the emphasis on "blockbusters" and the use of more sophisticated market research to define what books should be published represent a "rationalization," from the profit standpoint, of what has been a retrograde arm of capitalist industry, relying on editors' intuition and random selection. Pressures also increase to keep costs down, thereby reducing both quality and the pay scale for an average writer.

A survey of writers who had published at least one book revealed that the average author earned only \$4,775 from all writing in 1979, making an average of less than \$5 an hour for their time writing.

Hard times for ideas.

But the money isn't writers' only gripe. From the gossip in the halls it was obvious that some writers at the conference were making as much as several hundred



For the first time, representatives of more than 20 writers' groups actually talked with each other.

date the work. We don't need any more writers as solitary heroes. We need a heroic writers' movement."

Over 3,000 writers responded to the invitation by The Nation Institute (associated with *The Nation*) to consider the effect on writers of growing threats to writers' livelihoods and ability to work freely—corporate concentration in the publishing industry, censorship and rightward trends in government.

Whether they left their dozens of workshops on cultural wars, progressive media, the Freedom of Information Act

clear what its future may be.

The Congress drew mainly left and liberal writers and took up issues of feminism, nuclear war and Latin American revolution, but the major focus was on issues that affect writers as workers. Yet even if there is a general crisis for writers, left-leaning writers feel the pinch more severely. "Why are we here?" novelist and cartoonist Jules Feiffer asked. "Are we in a funk or in a crisis? Or, to be more precise, are leftist writers in a funk?" Neo-conservatives and the two-cheers-for-capitalism types don't seem to be complaining, he noted. "Maybe we're here as stunned witnesses to an accident—The United States of America," Feiffer concluded.

Bottom-line books.

Since the beginning of the last decade the publishing industry—and especially the book industry—has undergone a dramatic change. Independent publishing houses have been swallowed by larger conglomerates that often have only marginal interest in cultural creation and every part of the industry has become



"To hell with the censors," said Kurt Vonnegut (above). June Jordan and Philip Green (left) co-chaired the plenary session.

thousand dollars a year, while the majority of even acknowledged professionals had a hard time paying the bills. There was a feeling, as Toni Morrison said, that "writers are less and less central to the idea and subject of literature" as well as to American cultural and political life.

The problem there goes beyond corporate concentration to a longstanding problem: many Americans read very little, though they may hear what writers prepare for others to say.

Despite America's first-amendment heritage, many also don't like to listen to what some writers have to say. Attacks on the use of certain books in schools and libraries, even book-burnings, have been on the rise. And the Moral Majority can be quite sophisticated in its justification of such assaults. Michael Farris, general counsel to Falwell's legions in

Continued on page 8

TMI

Continued from page 3

Steve Brooks of the Public Interest Resource Center (PIRC), a citizen-action group here, confirms that the pressure to reopen Three Mile Island comes not only from utilities and their stockholders, but from the banking industry as well. Brooks, who has just completed a study of GPU's finances, reports that a consortium of "between 40 and 80" banks across the country have guaranteed loans of up to \$200 million for the utility, and that GPU's ability to make good on that debt hinges on the restart of Unit One. "If GPU goes under," he adds, "it will have a powerful effect on the whole industry."

Nor are banks the only major investors betting on GPU's survival. The billion-dollar Reliance Group (which also owns 6.5 percent of the New York Times Company), recently bought 172,300 shares of dirt-cheap GPU common stock. And the Rothschild firm that testified in Washington—one of the largest securities firms in the country—has also bought into GPU in recent months.

But such interests are looking less and less attractive. Several months ago the *New York Times* quoted a report from the Wall Street brokerage firm of Bache, Halsey, Stuart, Shields that sounded an ominous note: "We anticipate that the uncertainty of costs will escalate to the point where nuclear plants are an unattractive financial proposition.... Nuclear plants may either be too expensive to build, or their payoff too uncertain, to compensate investors adequately for the risks taken."

The pressure on the NRC from GPU itself, of course, has been intense. In the hearings here, for example, the NRC has repeatedly backed off from requiring changes in plant design at Three Mile Island when GPU has resisted them. In Brook's view, the government agency and the utility have united in their defense of Three Mile Island against anti-nuclear groups and local residents who want it shut down for good.

Problems, problems, problems.

The licensing board had actually completed its hearings at one point this summer and issued a clean bill of health for

Three Mile Island management while its final recommendations on plant design and emergency planning were yet to come. But in August a scandal broke after two TMI reactor operators resigned in the face of evidence that they had cheated on their qualifying exams. When investigation suggested that other operators may have cheated as well, the NRC was forced to reopen temporarily its hearings on the company's management.

But the weakest point in the case for restarting Three Mile Island is the lack of emergency plans for the evacuation of local residents in the event of another accident. Radioactive releases could begin within 30 minutes of a malfunction in the system, and the towns and villages around the plant simply don't have the personnel or the equipment to stage a full-scale evacuation that quickly. There are not enough school buses or drivers, for example, to evacuate all the school-children at one time.

While the debate rages over restarting Unit One, nuclear engineers estimate that it will take until 1988 for the damaged Unit Two reactor to be completely decontaminated and reconstructed, leading some to wonder whether the reactor might not be simply abandoned and transformed into a permanent—if unplanned—disposal site for nuclear waste. Three Mile Island technicians are now testing a decontamination system designed to clean up the 700,000 gallons of highly radioactive water that has spilled from the reactor's cooling system onto the floor of the reactor building. But environmental activists in the area have opposed this method for fear that the processed water will ultimately be dumped into the Susquehanna River.

The cleanup must also dispose of about 38,000 uranium fuel rods damaged in the nuclear accident, and if Unit Two is to be rehabilitated, researchers must eventually find a way to remove the broken reactor core to a laboratory for study. At that point a new reactor could be constructed on the site.

GPU estimates the cost of the cleanup alone at \$1 billion, and has asked both the federal government and the utility industry for help. But other utilities have not been eager to assume the financial burden of Three Mile Island and, despite favorable signs from the Reagan administration, a federal bailout of GPU is still only a remote possibility.

Despite such problems, officials at Three Mile Island speak optimistically of restarting Unit One this fall. The plant



A 1980 rally in Harrisburg against reopening Three Mile Island.

site itself bustles with the activity of workers and technicians who are making equipment modifications and testing the reactor's systems. For this purpose about \$40 million has been diverted from the effort to clean up Unit Two. Local residents are especially apprehensive about the spilled waste water that, if allowed to leak, would contaminate the water table that serves the surrounding population. But in a contest that pits such concerns against GPU, the nuclear industry and Wall Street investors, there seems little question as to which side will prevail. ■

David Spurr teaches journalism at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle campus.

Rescue

Continued from page 3

tailspin and returns it to favor on Wall Street. Moreover, thanks to the Reagan tax bill, electric utilities will find it far easier not only to afford new nuclear power plants but also to attract the risk capital needed to finance them.

Where Reagan is certain to meet great opposition is his reprocessing and proliferation proposals, particularly if the plutonium resulting from reprocessing is used to make weapons. Capitol Hill has traditionally taken a firm line against any policy it believes will accelerate nuclear-weapons proliferation, and the Senate was very critical this July of the administration's relaxation of proliferation safeguards.

Reagan's reprocessing proposal would strip the United States of all credibility in attempting to dissuade other nations from using their commercial nuclear facilities to build bombs. More important, it would constitute an open admission of something Washington and the nuclear industry have tried for 40 years to keep a secret: that there is no such thing as an exclusively peaceful atom and no difference between nuclear power and nuclear weapons.

The *New York Times* drew attention to this danger in a Sept. 30 editorial condemning Reagan's proposal as "not just misguided but dangerous." The *Times* sternly warned Reagan against inadvertently precipitating in the United States the same sort of coalition between anti-nuclear and antiweapons groups that is now putting strong pressures on Western European governments and fouling U.S.-NATO weapons deployment plans.

Whether the Reagan administration will heed such well-intentioned warnings is uncertain. What is clear is that the administration and the nuclear industry will never give up trying to revive nuclear power of their own accord; they will have to be stopped by public opposition more massive, more militant and more broadly based than any yet seen. It will be ironic indeed if, in his zeal to save nuclear power, Ronald Reagan instead unleashes just that sort of new political force. ■

Mark Hertsgaard, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, is author of the forthcoming *Atomic Brotherhood*.

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By Ron Ridenour

COPENHAGEN

DENMARK'S INCIPENT ENERGY nationalization movement—which fell short in its bid to socialize this country's young oil industry last spring—has succeeded in pressuring the state to strike a better deal for the nation's oil consumers and to adopt a national plan in which renewable energy alternatives are mildly encouraged. In the process it has laid the foundation for a broader movement to nationalize all of Denmark's energy resources.

Probably no other western nation has confronted the energy crisis with fewer domestic resources than Denmark. This long-winter country has no coal or nuclear plants and, until recently, no oil or gas production. At the time of the first big OPEC price hike in 1973, Denmark depended on 13 million tons of imported oil a year to meet 90 percent of its energy needs. In fact, fuel accounted for 15 percent of all imports.

Today Danes import a million tons less than in 1973. (By contrast, the U.S. has increased its annual oil imports by nearly a quarter in that period.) Denmark's small share of the North Sea oil—Britain and Norway have 1,300 drillings, compared with 40 for Denmark—now meets about 10 percent of its energy needs and that figure is expected to triple in two years.

The mere threat of a movement to nationalize energy forced Denmark to renegotiate its oil concessions.

Much of the industry here switched to coal. The cheaper fuel now provides 80 percent of electricity needs; but the coal is imported from Poland, England, West Germany and South Africa—and the latter source has caused considerable embarrassment and conflict. The government has appealed to the privately owned utility companies not to buy coal from the apartheid regime, which the Danish government officially opposes, so far without success.

A 1980 poll showed 51 percent support for oil industry nationalization, with only 17 percent opposed. It took hard bargaining by Social Democratic government leaders to stem that tide. To alleviate the mounting demand for nationalization, Prime Minister Anker Jorgensen reluctantly renegotiated the oil concessions given to Danish shipping magnate A.P. Moller.

"The 50-year concession granted Moller in 1962 was a unique give-away," Preben Wilhjelm, the leading nationalization advocate, told *In These Times*. "Moller had only to pay the state 8.5 percent royalties. The regular 37 percent corporate tax was never paid because costs have outweighed profits."

"True, the Moller consortium [which includes Shell, Standard of California and Texaco] has yet to turn a profit, but the conservative estimates indicate that the underground fields will yield about \$100 billion for a mere \$5 billion investment. So far the Moller group has barely explored the area, investing only half a billion dollars. Moller makes his profits off tanker shipping, and he and the multinational companies are happy to wait for even higher prices," said Wilhjelm.

Wilhjelm is a nuclear physicist and, at 46, a leading member of the Left Socialist Marxist party. He is also one of its six elected members of the *Folketing*, Denmark's 170-member parliament. Ten parties are represented (the eleventh, the widely pro-USSR Communist Party, lost its seven seats in the 1979 election), with the ruling Social Democrats holding 69 seats. The Marxist left has 17 seats.

"Moller was given exclusive rights to the North Sea oil areas because he was a major shipper and is Danish. It was in

IN THE WORLD

SCANDINAVIA

Danes try to kick the oil-import habit

the 'national interest,'" Wilhjelm sardonically said. "Two weeks after he was blessed, he sold half the rights to the consortium companies, and more later. Now he owns 30 percent and has never had to tell the people what he got for the give-away."

Gross misuses of Moller's concession responsibilities to develop the area caused the government to take back the natural gas rights over a long period. "But the government didn't want to develop fuel for the people, only to sell it to other capitalists," Wilhjelm said.

Headed off at the pass.

Once Wilhjelm was able to focus the attention of the media—and especially

But some gains were made. One clause bitter to the businessmen allows the government to take control of production during a national emergency. The state also has the right to establish joint ventures with other companies, and it will build a pipeline to shore from drill holes. Most important, the state can, in principle, nationalize energy industries, according to a court ruling that grew out of the conflict this spring.

Coincidentally with the oil rights battle the state formulated a new energy plan to replace the one first formulated in 1976. The new plan gives renewable alternative energy sources a significant boost, calling for such sources to account for 2 percent of heating needs by

are publicizing alternative energy. They cite a report by a group of Danish scientists, chaired by the former chair of the nuclear commission (the office was abolished in 1976 after successful protests), contending that renewable energy can make Denmark entirely self-sufficient by 2030. And they point to the following:

- Half of this cold country's energy is used in home and work-place heating. For that reason it has pioneered the process of burning straw for district heating in a unique system now operating in Svendborg—15,000 tons of straw, supplied by 17 farmers who would have simply burned it in their fields, will replace 5,000 tons of oil at a far lower cost.

- Experiments to supply district heating from otherwise wasted factory energy are underway in several small towns.

- 1,000 solar heating installations are now in use, subsidized by the state. A new surface coating for such systems has just been developed that will improve heat absorption rates by 30 percent.

- Energy savings in the last half decade account for 10 percent of former energy output. The scientists' report projects savings through known, usable technology (mostly insulation) to 60 percent of current use by 2030.

- Wind power is tremendous in Denmark, and it can be stored during calm periods. Scores of windmills are now in operation, but 3,000 could provide a third of total energy demand. An alternative high school in Tvind built the world's largest windmill which now sup-



Henri Corlier-Bresson

Denmark once had 30,000 windmills and could build them again, bigger and more efficient.

the end of this decade, and 4 percent by the end of the century. Windmill power is recognized as capable of supplying 10 percent of electricity needs. And a recent ministry of energy report advocates both geothermal heat drilling and the greater use of windmill power for heat as well as electricity, projecting that renewable energy can create 200,000 jobs over 15 years.

Pushing the alternatives.

Two important grassroots organizations, the Organization for Information about Nuclear Power (OIA) with 140 local branches and 2,000 activists, and the Organization for Renewable Energy (OVE),

plies all its electricity. Another windmill, costing \$14,000 with repairs, paid for itself in five years and thereafter provided free electricity to a small factory. Environmentalists recall that Denmark once had 30,000 windmills and could build them again, bigger and more efficient.

The anti-nuclear OOA, begun in 1974, was successful in stopping a drive by big business and the Social Democratic government to rely more heavily on nuclear power following the 1973 oil price hikes. A nuclear reactor research laboratory was built in 1957 to study the disposal of poisonous wastes. It has yet to solve the problem, giving the anti-nuke and renewable energy movements their biggest weapon. Safety-conscious Danes refuse to back nuclear power three-to-two. But the war is not over.

When the new energy plan was adopted, Prime Minister Jorgensen called attention to the nuclear controversy. "Studies of the safety problems attendant upon nuclear power stations are to be continued...the government is working on the premise that the people shall decide in a referendum on the installation of nuclear power plants."

Ron Ridenour last reported for *In These Times* on Iceland.

Writers

Continued from page 5

Washington state, claimed his right as a taxpayer to object to buying Kurt Vonnegut's books for the public library.

Vonnegut—waving the flag for the good old values of the Constitution—rejoined, "To hell with the censors, those Benedict Arnolds, who feel that this would be a much better country if our citizens could somehow be made ignorant of this or that. Give me knowledge or give me death."

The noose is being tightened at the other end, too. With the new legislation against revealing names of CIA agents and preparations to undermine the Freedom of Information Act, writers are being cut off from information and the right to publish.

Writers, through organization, can confront some of these problems. Congress participants were inspired by reports from Europe, where writers unions in



Congress participants overwhelmingly endorsed the idea of union even while some expressed skepticism about its effectiveness.

Scandinavia and Britain have won writers payment for each time their book is checked out of the library and boosted the royalty rates on standardized contracts. The Writers Guild, representing movie and TV writers, has greatly multi-

plied their pay, earning \$9,000 for the amount of work for which many freelance magazine writers might be pleased to earn \$500 to \$1,000.

But writers worried about how—with their isolated, fragmented, diverse work

for an extremely varied range of employers—they could be any collective threat. "They cannot publish without us," Suzanne Gordon argued. But James Ridgeway, who advocates a union but is skeptical about its potential bargaining power, noted, "I've been replaced endless numbers of times. I've sped up production. And I still make lower and lower rates." Competition among writers can be downright ruthless, even for rotten pay. Ridgeway argued that writers had no future without changes in who controls the means of production in publishing, and urged a writers' organization to take advantage of new technologies and marketing strategies.

But other groups—like the Graphic Artists Guild—have made some progress with a similarly diffuse, individualistic constituency. A writers union, Gordon suggested, could set standards for prompt payment, penalties for damaging delays, extra payment for more than one rewrite or payment for first chapters requested by publishers. Sliding pay scales could be devised according to the circulation of magazines. Not every writer would be required to lift up pens in strike against the whole publishing industry: publisher by publisher, magazine by magazine, standards could be pressed.

The more general problem that writers face is, as Prof. Herbert Schiller argued, that "information" is becoming a major source of profit and control for big corporations and that increasingly all information is treated as a commodity. With that writers lose their creative freedom and their mission. "To mean anything is not in vogue," Morrison said. And Lila Garrett, a director of the Writers Guild and a TV writer-director-producer, observed, "The reason for the interest in the union here is not money, though it damn well should be, but rather a frustration of the creative process."

By the end of the Congress the plenary session gradually became bogged down in sticky political questions, such as a resolution narrowly passed with only a couple hundred people remaining calling on the U.S. government to provide military aid to South African liberation movements. But Victor Navasky, editor of *The Nation*, felt that whatever else happens, the Congress succeeded in accelerating the birth of a new union, linking existing writers groups, heightening awareness of writers' grievances and simply bringing the notoriously individualistic writers together to talk about nearly anything they wanted.

Although the Writers Congress itself could end up being primarily a political expression of the left among American writers, Navasky thought that the broadly political statements had been the least significant actions taken. On the whole the tension between two separate agendas—speaking for all writers and speaking on behalf of left writers—was handled about as well as could be expected. Yet, Navasky suggested, the agendas converge as nearly all writers are affected by the Reagan administration and by publishing industry concentration. Ultimately, he argued, "the overwhelming sentiment in favor of a union symbolizes the profound discontent of those writers who were here and those who weren't."

Eventually, the garret and its mythology may go the way of the sweatshop. ■ James Cusick is a former *In These Times* intern.

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SWEDEN



Though most Americans associate the Swedish housing program with high-rise, functionalist architecture, in fact most new construction consisted of row houses and small flats.

The "miracle" of a well-housed nation

Our Oct. 7 issue contained two reports on squatters movements in West Germany and the U.S. The housing situation in both countries contrasts sharply with Sweden, where Social Democratic governments have made adequate housing a top priority. But their success, as Richard Appelbaum reports, has created new difficulties.

By Richard Appelbaum

STOCKHOLM

IN THE MID-'60S BOTH THE UNITED States and Sweden decided to end "shelter poverty." Sweden embarked on a 10-year program in 1966; the U.S. did so three years later. The level of new construction envisioned—annual rates of 10 to 13 units per thousand people and an increase of housing stock by one-third—was unprecedented in capitalist countries.

From 1966 to 1974, Sweden constructed more than one million housing units for its eight million inhabitants and over-reached its 10-year target. The U.S. did not. Lacking a way to implement its goals, the U.S. fell 8.4 millions units short of its 26 million goal. And most of the new construction was for middle and upper-income units. Low-income targets were achieved in only one year, 1976.

In Sweden, where housing has come to be regarded as a public utility, construction of publicly-owned and cooperative units has been the priority. In 1970, for example, 43 percent of all construction was undertaken by non-profit municipal housing companies. An additional 16 percent was done by cooperatives. Private rental housing accounted for only 13 percent of the total. (The remainder were owner-occupied homes.)

The "Swedish miracle," as the Social Democrats like to call it, began just after World War II, when the people of Sweden were among the most poorly housed in Europe, particularly in the rapidly-growing metropolitan areas of Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm. Almost 40

percent of housing units were private rentals, many crowded and of substandard quality. Fewer than 5 percent of all units were in cooperatives, and only 2 percent were in public housing.

For the next 30 years the ruling Social Democratic Party made housing a primary commitment. A combination of government subsidies and strong local planning "steered" new construction away from the private sector and towards tenure forms preferred by the Social Democrats. These included "public" rentals from the nonprofit municipal housing companies and quasi-private ownership through cooperative societies. By 1975, one out of every five housing units was owned by a municipal housing company, and one out of every seven was in a cooperative. Private rentals had declined to only 23 percent of the total.

The 10-year program included:

- Large-scale construction of planned suburban communities that provided housing of a quality unimaginable two decades earlier. Though many of these communities were dominated by the high-rise, functionalist architecture widely associated in the U.S. with Swedish public housing, most consisted of row houses and small flats. Housing was constructed around service and commercial centers and integrated with regional mass transit systems.

- The elimination of private landlords as a force in the determination of rents. Establishment of compulsory rent negotiations between public housing companies and tenant associations—which are binding on private, non-profit rentals as well—eliminated the need for the post-war system of rent controls by 1975. Under Swedish law, rents can reflect "utilization value" only. That is, apartments of the same size and quality charge the same rents, regardless of age, location, or cost to the owner.

- A system of housing allowances that reaches one-third of all households, including 42 percent of all public and pri-

vate renters. Half of all families with children receive supports, including approximately two-thirds of all renters. Support levels are intended to insure that no household spends more than one-fifth of its income on shelter. Unlike the American Section 8 housing program, rent supports in Sweden extend well into the middle class.

- Widespread municipal land-banking of remaining developable land in the principal urban areas. Public land is used either for the construction of public housing units, or leased to private developers under stringent controls. Under the "land condition," state loan subsidies for the construction of rental units are available only for projects constructed on land obtained from municipalities, thereby affording local control over speculation.

- The virtual ending of shelter poverty. In a country where the average blue-collar worker earns \$12,000 a year, an unsubsidized four-bedroom rental costs only about \$245 a month (all utilities included), while a comparable cooperative costs \$40 less.

Local control.

The Swedish government has empowered localities to solve their own housing problems, and it has provided the financial mechanisms to do so.

A series of post-war parliamentary acts provided municipalities with a monopoly on planning power, including the right to determine land use, the ability to purchase large amounts of land with government loans and the power to preempt purchase rights from private sellers. The right to expropriate has been repeatedly strengthened. Under present law municipalities may discount the effects of recent inflation in making reimbursements for expropriated land.

Municipalities also have strong powers of code enforcement. The laws are intended to assure that minimal standards are met, while preventing "luxury renewal" and subsequent rent increases that might result in displacement. Negligent landlords may have rents impounded and, in extreme cases, may lose their property to the municipality.

The principal financial mechanisms have included housing allowances, loans to municipalities for land-banking and a system of interest subsidies designed to promote more public forms of ownership. Under the present system of new-construction financing, 70 percent of the loan is obtained from private lenders, while the state makes up most of the remainder.

Since construction loans are heavily subsidized, this system strongly favors the more public forms of tenure. The subsidies themselves are considerably larger for cooperatives and rental units than private homes, reinforcing the preferential treatment. Subsidies cover all

time, Swedish law had placed limits on possible equity appreciation of co-op shares. Now members were free to sell their shares on the open market, much as condominium owners do in this country.

Cracks in the system.

But the past five years have revealed some fundamental problems. Increasingly affluent Swedes have begun to demand (and receive) detached suburban homes, despite 30 years of promoting the virtues of public housing and cooperatives. Surveys in the '50s indicated that only 30 to 40 percent of the population preferred to live in detached homes. The figure now approaches 90 percent. Two-thirds of all newly constructed units are now private homes, while only one-fifth are public rentals. Vacancy rates in high-rises are growing, as middle-income tenants move out, to be replaced by immigrant workers (one-eighth of the population). Segregation is now regarded as a potentially serious problem.

Also, there are strong pressures to convert rental units to cooperatives, especially in Stockholm, where a housing shortage is again being felt. Cooperative conversion offers the potential for enormous speculative profits, since under the Swedish system of financing a 1 percent downpayment is all that is needed to establish the equivalent of full equity control in the cooperative sector. Conversion pressures have additionally resulted in fears on the left that the most desirable public housing will revert to private ownership, leaving the remaining tenants with the stigma that attaches to public housing in other capitalist countries.

The reasons for these problems have partly to do with the success of the Social Democrats in producing an affluent society. In the rental sector, they also reflect dissatisfaction with bureaucracy and inflexible public housing management. These difficulties are widely recognized and discussed in Swedish housing circles. This past year the national Swedish Association of Municipal Housing Companies (SABO) negotiated an agreement with the National Tenants' Union to give tenants greater say in the management of their housing. But these efforts are limited and voluntary.

The cooperative sector, largely because of its commercial success, has come increasingly to resemble ordinary home ownership. Co-op members now have virtually total control over the use and resale of their units. There are in fact pressures to make legal what already exists in fact—private ownership of cooperative units, or condominiums.

At the root of the move towards private forms of ownership are tax laws that work to the disadvantage of renters. As in this country, homeowners get interest and property tax deductions from their income tax liability. In the past,

By the mid-'70s, Sweden had largely achieved its goal of two bedrooms for every four-person family. But there are new problems.

interest payments in excess of a "guaranteed rate," set initially at extremely low levels—only 3 percent for co-ops and rentals and 5.5 percent for private homes. Rates subsequently rise to market, though much more rapidly for homes than co-ops or rentals.

By the mid-'70s, Sweden has pronounced its housing problems essentially solved. The standard of two bedrooms for a four-person family had been widely achieved. Speculation had presumably disappeared as the result of supply being brought into balance with demand, the removal of most developable urban land from the marketplace and the elimination of market rental pricing in favor of rent negotiations.

The termination of rent controls was one result of these achievements. Another was the removal of resale price controls on co-ops in 1968. Prior to that

these deductions have been largely offset by provisions in Swedish tax law requiring homeowners to report as income the imputed rental value of their homes, much as if they were landlords renting to themselves. But "imputed rent" has failed to keep pace with the rapid price and interest-rate inflation of recent years. As a result, homeowner deductions are substantial, particularly in a country where many middle-income people are in the 70 percent tax bracket. The Swedish National Institute for Building Research estimates that tax deductions reduce the actual cost of home ownership by 25 percent, which makes owning less expensive than renting or even cooperative membership for middle-income households.

Richard Appelbaum is a sociologist at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

WHEN 22 WORLD LEADERS convene Oct. 22 in Cancun, Mexico, to ponder the growing conflict between the advanced capitalist "North" and the less developed "South," one head of state will be unexpectedly present: American President Ronald Reagan. Reagan's promise to attend was obtained last spring after the co-chairmen of the conference, Mexican President Lopez Portillo and Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kriesky, agreed to exclude Cuba and to postpone the meeting from June to October.

But except perhaps for some forays to Cancun's lush beaches, Reagan is expected to be present in body, but not in spirit. As evidenced by Secretary of State Alexander Haig's address to the United Nations and Reagan's speech at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last month, the administration has decided to take a hardline position against third world demands for greater aid and influence and for more equitable and stable prices for their raw materials.

Reagan's stance toward the third world resembles his posture toward American blacks. After having created an uproar in June 1980 when he declined to address the NAACP in Miami, Reagan settled on a strategy of making all appearances but conceding nothing, appearing at the Urban League convention and feting black jazz musician Lionel Hampton at the White House while cutting food stamps, medicare and public employment. Similarly, after first indicating that he would avoid what one aide termed the "sterile debate" that would take place at Cancun, Reagan has decided to make an appearance. But he will convey a message that will bring little joy to the delegates from the Ivory Coast, Bangladesh or Brazil, who will also be in attendance.

There is a further parallel between Reagan's strategies toward the third world and toward American blacks: just as his budget-cutting at home threatens social peace and economic growth, his intransigence toward the third world may threaten political and economic stability around the world. Opponents of Reagan's global version of supply-side economics include not only Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, but also respected world capitalist leaders like former British prime minister Edward Heath, New York investment banker Peter Peterson and former Common Market head Roy Jenkins. These leaders fear that Reagan's policies could precipitate a new world depression. And they believe that a new Marshall Plan for the third world is the only means of rescuing the advanced capitalist countries from their doldrums.

At Cancun some version of this position will be represented by both Southern and Northern leaders. As occurred last July at the Ottawa summit of Japanese, Western European, Canadian and American heads of state, the U.S. could again find itself isolated, its policies the object of scorn from friend and foe alike.

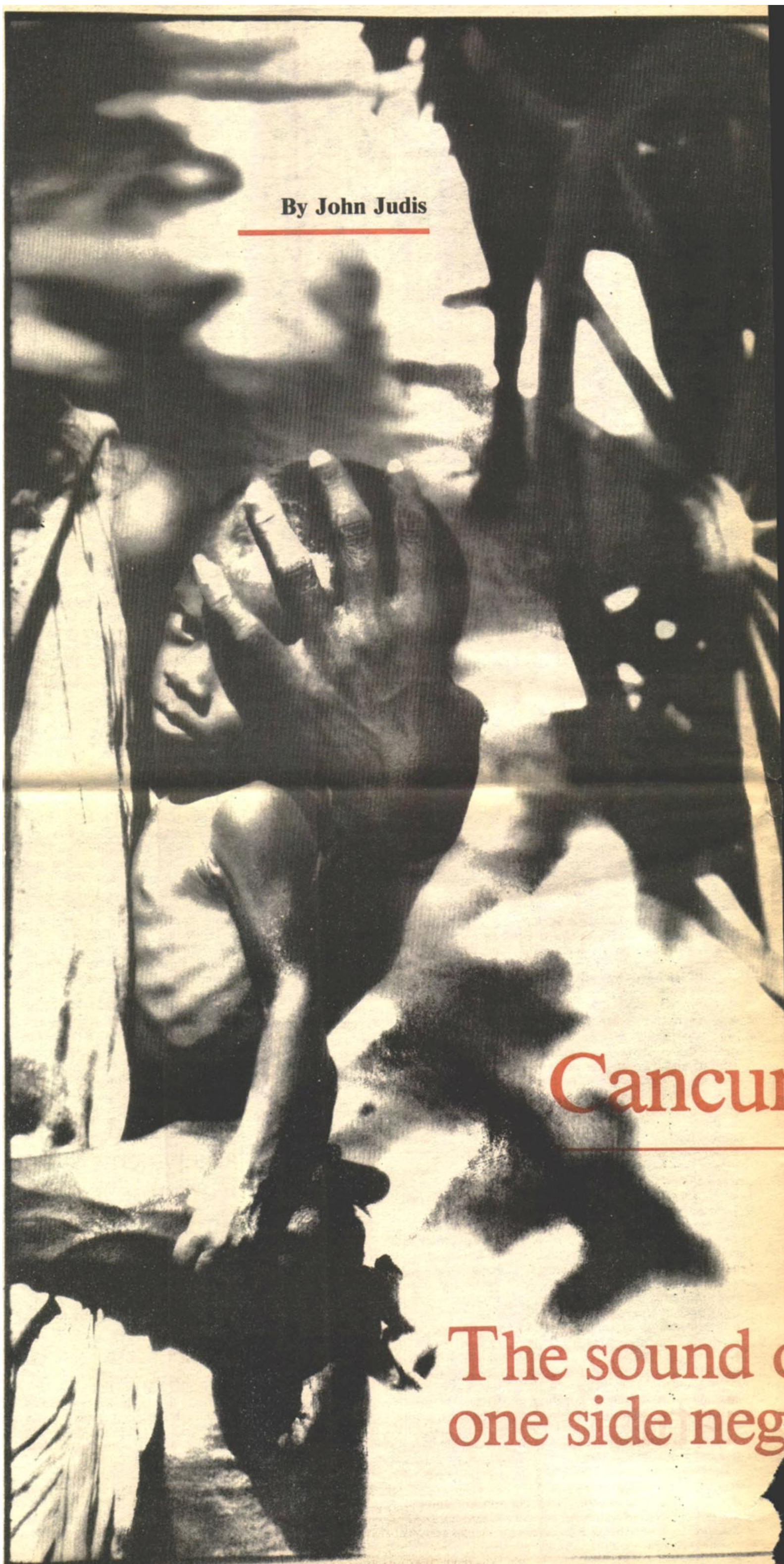
The road to Cancun.

The Cancun meeting in which heads of state will deliberate North-South issues is the first of its kind. Whatever its results, the nations of the South have already won a substantial victory in their long struggle for collective recognition.

The road to Cancun really began in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, when 29 countries met to form the Non-Aligned Movement. The countries' common identity—which was reflected in the newly coined term "third world"—was both political and economic: the countries were set off both by their subordinate place within a world capitalist system and by their desire for neutrality in the struggle between the U.S.-led West and the Soviet-led East.

In the early '60s, the same countries took the lead in setting up the UN Conference on Trade and Development—UNCTAD. UNCTAD, which first met in Geneva in March 1964, became the forum in which the "Group of 77" formulated their demands for a New International Economic Order. UNCTAD has convened four times since 1964, and the Group of 77 has grown to over 110 countries and the simple designation of

By John Judis



Cancun

The sound of
one side neg

Henri Cartier-Bresson

"third world" or "the South" has been complicated by the rise of the oil-producing and newly industrialized countries. But the countries' demands, first formulated by Argentine economist Raul Prebisch, have remained basically the same. They revolve around three central concerns:

•**Global redistribution:** Excluding for a moment the oil-producing countries, the South has three-fourths of the world's population, but only one-fifth of its income. For that reason the Group of 77 has demanded a massive transfer of resources and funds from the North to the South. UNCTAD has called on the advanced capitalist countries to devote 0.7 percent rather than the current 0.35 percent of their gross national products to foreign aid.

•**Equalizing the terms of trade:** Most countries in the South depend for their foreign currency income on raw materials exports to the advanced capitalist countries. But the prices of these exports are subject to sharp fluctuations. In 1974, for example, Zambian copper, which accounts for 94 percent of that country's export earnings, was selling for \$3,034 a ton; by the end of the year it was selling for \$1,290 a ton.

Accordingly, the terms of trade between the South's raw materials and the North's manufactured goods have tended to favor the North. In 1960, for instance, 25 tons of Sri Lanka's natural rubber purchased six tractors; in 1975 it purchased only two. In response, the countries of the South have called for some kind of commodity price stabilization arrangement that would protect prices from sharp fluctuations and reflect more equitable terms of trade.

•**One country-one vote:** In the international financial institutions created after World War II—the IMF and the World Bank—votes are weighted according to members' financial contributions. The U.S. and its industrialized allies therefore command a decisive majority, and the U.S. alone can veto any proposal. As a result, these institutions' lending policies have tended to reflect American foreign policy: attempts at state planning and socialism within the South have been discouraged and aid has been used to help finance investments by multinationals. In response, the countries of the South have called for shifting international economic decisions to the UN General Assembly or some similar body, where voting is by country and therefore controlled by the more numerous nations of the South. At the least, they have called for greater voting power within the IMF and World Bank.

The Brandt Commission.

The initiatives sponsored by UNCTAD and the Non-Aligned Movement pretty well ran aground in 1977, when the Paris meetings of the Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC)—which included representatives of both the North and the South—failed to reach any significant agreement after 18 months of acrimonious wrangling.

The next important step was taken by leaders from the North. In 1977, under the sponsorship of the UN secretary-general, former German chancellor Willy Brandt convened a North-South commission to work out a common program. The commission included New York investment banker Peter Peterson (a Republican who authored the report that precipitated Richard Nixon's 1971 decision to abandon the Bretton Woods monetary system), former Conservative Party prime minister Edward Heath, former Swedish prime minister Olof Palme and representatives from Kuwait, Colombia, Tanzania, India, Indonesia and other nations of the South.

In 1979 the Commission issued its report, *North-South: A Program for Survival* (published in the U.S. by MIT Press). The basic premise of the report, articulated by Brandt in his introduction and restated interminably throughout, is that there are "growing mutual interests" between the North and the South. "We are becoming aware," Brandt says, "that a quickened pace of development in the South also serves people in the North."

The report puts forward a social dem-

ocratic version of Keynesianism, applied worldwide. "In the world, as in nations," the report argues, "economic forces left entirely to themselves tend to produce growing inequality. Within nations public policy has to protect the weaker partners. The time has come to apply this precept to relations between nations in the world community."

By transferring funds and resources from the North to the South, the Commission members hope to awaken greater demand for the products of the North and in that way aid the development of both North and South. As the report states: "The large-scale transfers we will propose are seen as measures both to support growth in developing countries directly and to permit a significant expansion of world trade. It is in this sense that we view them as contributing to growth and employment in the North as well as the South."

The report's recommendations reflect some compromise between the North and the South, especially on energy issues, but its general thrust is a ringing endorsement by the North of the South's call for a New International Economic

and Carter administrations, the IMF has also drastically expanded its loan program, which was initially designed to help advanced capitalist countries allay temporary fluctuations in their balance of payments. Over 75 percent of IMF loans now go to help less-developed countries ease what have been permanent balance of payments crises. As one Chase Manhattan Bank official put it, "The Fund has become a sustainer of standards of living rather than a supplier of balance-of-payments relief."

Initially, this new IMF role was dictated by the special crisis caused by the 1973 oil shock, which sent billions of surplus petro-dollars into U.S. and European banks. The banks loaned these funds to nations in the South threatened by rising oil bills. But as the crisis continued, the banks found themselves vulnerable to defaults by the debtor countries. They sought to use the IMF both to provide funds, which were then recycled back to the banks as debt payments, and to police the economies of these countries to make sure they didn't aggravate their own balance-of-payments deficits.

Many leaders of the industrialized "North" now believe that a massive infusion of aid to the third world is needed to avoid global depression. But Reagan has no intention of compromising on his supply-side approach to less developed nations.

Order. It echoes UNCTAD's demand for the "massive transfer" of funds, it endorses commodity stabilization agreements, it is critical of the IMF and World Bank for imposing austerity upon its aid recipients and it calls for a new World Development Fund, in which the South would have greater influence than it has in the IMF. This fund, financed by taxes on international trade of luxuries and arms, would finance development in the South.

The report concludes with a proposal for a North-South summit meeting of "some 25 world leaders who could ensure fair representation of major world groupings, to enable initiatives and concessions to be thrashed out with candor and boldness." Inspired by the Brandt Commission report, Lopez Portillo and Kreisky set about organizing Cancun.

The Brandt Commission's report reflects a growing consensus among some Western European and third world leaders. Its recommendations were immediately endorsed by Common Market head Roy Jenkins, who framed them in terms of a "Marshall Plan for the third world." In the U.S., *Time* magazine editorialized on behalf of a Marshall Plan for the third world as a means for escaping stagnation in the world economy. But the report's social democratic thrust has made it unpalatable to most American policymakers. In the U.S., the debate is not between left and right, but center and right.

The center was represented in the '70s by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former World Bank president Robert McNamara, and by the Carter administration's foreign policy. They have favored what might be described as "Keynesianism on the North's terms."

Under McNamara the World Bank, with support from the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations, increased its loan commitments to the South from \$953.5 million in 1968 to \$11.5 billion in 1980. Before Carter left office, he committed the U.S. to increase its World Bank contribution by \$12 billion over three years. As Robert L. Ayres of the Overseas Development Council explained in *Foreign Policy*, these loans were intended to help build "the basic facilities that pave the way for profitable private investment." They were also intended to forestall or pre-empt the accumulation of social and political pressures."

With the support of the Nixon, Ford

The U.S. also used both the IMF and World Bank to block third world attempts at socialism and nationalization in Chile and Jamaica. Any proposals to shift international loan jurisdiction to the UN were rejected, as were proposals for a "common fund" to stabilize commodity prices.

Global Reaganomics.

Over the objections of Budget Director David Stockman, the Reagan administration decided to fulfill the Carter administration's promise of increased aid to the World Bank. The administration is even expected to fight the attempt by Congress to cut the funding. But it has thrown overboard most of the rhetorical trimmings and the overall Keynesian framework that in the past made the U.S. position at least debatable among Southern leaders, if not palatable. The Reagan administration has decided to transport its supply-side, monetarist economics to the North-South arena.

In his Sept. 29 speech to the IMF, Reagan lectured the delegates on the virtues of free enterprise. "We who live in free-market societies believe that growth, prosperity and, ultimately, human fulfillment, are created from the bottom up, not the government down," Reagan declared. Privately, the administration demanded that the IMF stiffen its loan conditions to require that recipient governments pursue free-market policies. They also put the kabosh on a \$12 billion planned expansion of the IMF's loans for next year.

Most important, the administration declared it was sticking with its attempt to reduce domestic inflation through high interest rates and urged that other countries follow its lead. "Unless a nation puts its own financial and economic house in order, no amount of aid will produce progress," Reagan said.

The result of continuing high interest rates will be continuing global stagnation, as other Northern countries raise their interest rates to prevent their currency from flowing to the U.S., and as it becomes correspondingly more difficult to finance any kind of investments. The countries of the South will suffer even more than the countries of the North, since the rising interest rates will adversely affect their growing debt to Northern banks, the interest for which floats according to prevailing world rates.

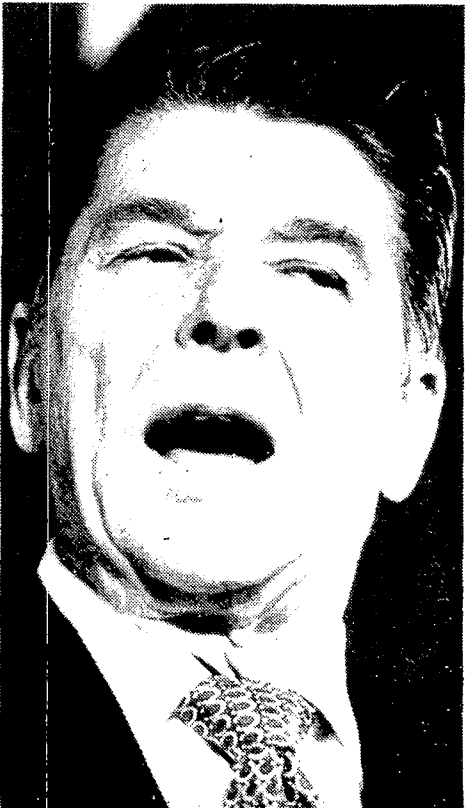
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In the negotiations leading up to Cancun, the Reagan administration fought back proposals by the Southern nations that the meeting issue a final communiqué, work according to a fixed agenda or institutionalize itself as a regular event. Cancun will be a totally private bull session.

But as at Ottawa, Reagan will have to hear strenuous objections to his policies. In the prestigious monthly, *Euromoney*, Edward Heath got off an opening salvo against Reagan's policies, which he described as a "serious abdication of responsibility." "The harsh reality is that a number of those Western leaders who are in a privileged position to lead a rejuvenation of the world economy have responded by draining yet more money out of their recession-struck economies."

Heath and other Northern leaders who oppose Reagan's policies have two related fears. The first is that, by plunging third world nations further into debt and recession, the Reagan policies will en-



As at Ottawa, Reagan at Cancun will hear strenuous objections to his policy.

courage left-wing revolutions. *Business Week* reports, for instance, that by pushing Costa Rica "to adopt painful fiscal and monetary reforms as the price of a financial bailout," the Reagan administration may be imperilling "Central America's only democracy."

But secondly, Heath and others fear a fullscale economic crisis as third world countries, deprived of aid and forced to pay higher interest on their debts, are forced to default on their loans to U.S. and European banks. "The British and U.S. governments—the ultimate guarantors of these commercial loans—have a profound interest in avoiding default by any of the many developing countries that are deeply indebted to the Northern banking system," Heath argued. "It may not even take default by a huge developing country to trigger a serious collapse of confidence within the commercial banking system."

In the wake of the 1979-80 oil price increases and the rise in American interest rates, the situation of Northern banks, which have made substantial loans to third world countries, has again become perilous. From 1971 to 1980, the total debt of non-oil exporting, less-developed countries (LDCs) to banks and governments has risen from \$50-\$65 billion to about \$400 billion. About \$200 billion is owed to private banks.

For their part, the banks have become more dependent on foreign loans for their own income. In 1970 the top 10 American banks received 17.5 percent of their income from foreign loans; in 1979 they received 42.6 percent. The loans made by banks like Citibank, the Bank of America and Chase Manhattan to countries like Brazil, Argentina, Zaire and Korea are huge. In 1979 the top nine American banks had \$38.6 billion on loan to non-oil LDCs. Together, they had only \$21.9 billion in capital backing up these loans.

The third world countries' ability to pay their debts depends on their export earnings, but rising interest rates and oil

prices have all but destroyed several major countries' export earnings. Heath estimates that a \$1-a-barrel increase in the price of oil increases the aggregate cost of third world imports by \$1.5 billion; a 1 percent increase in interest rates raises the aggregate cost by \$2 billion.

Brazil, for instance, owes \$61.2 billion in external debt. According to a *Wall Street Journal* analysis, interest payments on its debt now take up 32 percent of its export earnings. Oil imports take up another 45 percent. If one adds to this the payment of that part of the loan's principal that is due annually, Brazil pays out 107 percent of its export earnings on debt service and oil imports—and this figure does not include its other imports.

The only way that Brazil can make up the difference between its import bill and its export earnings—foreign banks are not eager to hold onto inflated *cruceros*—is by borrowing more dollars, which in turn increases its debt. Any new rise in interest rates or oil prices could put Brazil out of business.

The combination of Reaganomics, shaky third world finances and the growing dependence of Northern banks on loan income from the third world raises the specter of an international credit collapse and a worldwide depression. "Our view is that the chances of a major international banking crisis within the next five or 10 years are significantly and uncomfortably greater than zero," Wharton School of Finance professors Jack Guttentag and Richard Herring argued this year in *Business and Society*. Economist Michael Lipton, writing in the British journal *International Affairs*, expresses the same fears. "If deflationism continues to reduce, at once, the West's capacity to buy from and to lend to the third world, while oil prices rise in real terms, a major default is odds on before the end of 1983."

Brandt's third worldism.

The Reagan administration may eventually have to back down from its deflationary stance. There were already hints that it had softened its hardline opposition to future IMF loans to India and Egypt. But it will at best revert to the Carter administration's increasingly monetarist 1980 positions. Meanwhile, the rest of the world will debate the Brandt Commission's report.

As a symposium on the report published by *Third World Quarterly* indicates, there is a left as well as right opposition to the Brandt report. This opposition casts some doubt on whether Brandt's economics are a feasible alternative to Reaganomics.

The central objection, articulated by economists Andre Gunder Frank and Dudley Seers, is that the report's proposed transfer of funds will not necessarily reach those it is supposed to benefit: for example, the 80 percent of Bangladesh citizens who are malnourished.

Seers charges that the Brandt report falls "into the usual trap of 'third worldism' that is, confusing governments and countries.... To put the matter bluntly, aid to governments of 'poor' countries is one thing; aid to poor people of these countries another."

There are numerous examples to illustrate Seers and Frank's point. In Brazil, which has been a major recipient of loans and aid, the richest 20 percent of the population increased their share of the national income during the '70s, while the share of the bottom 50 percent declined proportionately, along with their actual standard of living (measured in real wages), social services and infant survival rates.

The reason for this decline in living standards was not a lack of aid, but the way in which the aid was used. "Resources are quite adequate to end destitution immediately or quite soon, if those in power were determined to do so."

Seers and Frank make moral and political objections to the Commission's recommendations, but they also raise an economic objection: within the existing framework of relations between many third world governments and multinational corporations, they argue, an infusion of foreign capital may not benefit the workers of either the South or the

Some critics of the Brandt Commission point out that aid to poor countries may not benefit poor people in those countries—and may in fact exacerbate stagnation in the world economy.

North. And it may even exacerbate worldwide economic stagnation.

For some Southern nations, increased capital can even lead to greater unemployment. In Indonesia, for instance, exports have increased eight-fold during the '70s under the impetus of multinational corporate investments. But there has been a net loss of 60,000 jobs in Indonesia's export industries. And 50 million of 140 million Indonesians continue to live on 25 cents a day.

For Northern countries, the spread of multinationals exacerbates domestic unemployment in labor-intensive industries like textiles and shoes and increasingly in more capital-intensive industries like steel and autos. Worldwide, the spread of industry has aggravated the problem of surplus capacity. The UN estimates that by 1985 the third world's steelmaking capacity will exceed that of the U.S.,

of corporate capital, Reagan and Thatcher's policies are the only ones possible, even if they risk the collapse of the international economic system.

Frank ends up posing an all-or-nothing choice between Reaganism and worldwide socialist revolution. Such a choice underplays the converse of Seer's point: though not all aid to third world governments has redounded either to those countries' workers or to their industrial development, some has. During the '70s, real wages have increased in both Korea and Taiwan, with the result that these countries now face a problem of run-away shops. The governments in several newly industrialized nations, including Brazil, are now able to use the rivalries between multinationals and between advanced capitalist countries to bargain for more beneficial development schemes. And the demand generated by



Ex-Chancellor Willy Brandt headed the commission that endorsed the main points of a New International Economic Order.

Japan or Western Europe.

Frank argues that the Brandt report assumes that the world economic crisis is one of "insufficient demand" when it is really one of "overaccumulation of excess productive capacity." What is needed is not new demand that will expand production in already obsolescent steel or textile mills, but the destruction of much of the old industrial base. "In the medium term, the needs of capital and its profitable investment are not served so much by immediate new expansion on the heels of increased demand as by temporary retrenchment and other measures to reduce costs of production, before increased demand can become useful and new investment possible."

Frank argues that from the standpoint

loans and capital exports to the third world was largely responsible for pulling the North out of the 1974-75 recession. In short, with some important qualifications, the Brandt report might still be the basis for a left opposition internationally to Reaganism.

This possibility is spoken for by economist Michael Lifton. Referring to the Brandt report, he said, "This is, of course, international neo-Keynesianism. Is this not 'dead'? Well, imperfect Keynesian management and Bretton Woods gave the world economy 1945 to 1973; imperfect monetarist management and Milton Friedman have so far supplied 1974 to 1980. Reports of the death of neo-Keynesianism are therefore grossly exaggerated."

LETTERS

IN THESE TIMES is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

LONG LIFE

I WANT TO SAY "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" Nov. 4th. It is my birthday too, but I've been around longer. When I was born my mother was not allowed to vote—so she stayed home on election day and had me, and I've been trying to get even ever since. Hope you make it as long as I have. We need you.

—Ruby Clouser
Mojave, Calif.

WE'RE DIFFERENT!

BETWEEN GREG CALVERT ("Why are leftists leaping to the family's defense?") and Michael Lerner ("A new pro-family group really belongs on the left"), *ITT*'s editorial policy toward gays has ranged from tokenism to outright atrocious, so it's nice to be able to say that Greg Calvert is a gay activist who speaks my own mind. He is right to state that socialists "ought to be the first to point out that all the talk about defending the family is a reaction of fear in the face of change." This nostalgia, whether it comes from the "left" or the right, is very much a part of what Calvert calls "the same old pile of political horseshit."

Michael Lerner gets the last word in this "Dialog" (surprise!) and begins by saying, "Greg Calvert misunderstands..." The right is defending the patriarchal family, see, whereas social democrats are defending "families in all their varieties (including gay families, single parent families, extended families)." This is a piece of opportunist sophistry that gays, feminists and socialists with any spine must resist. My lover and I are not a family, nor will we allow straight leftists like Lerner nor straight dinosaurs like Jerry Falwell to define our relationship only in the shadow of the family. My lover and I are comrades, lovers, friends and members of the militant gay community. We have said good-bye to Lerner's strategy—opposing (appeasing) the right by trying to take the wind out of its sails. We chart a different course entirely.

Should socialists advance socialism by taking up the banner of capitalism? Should we advance community by taking up the banner of the family? "Community is the key to family life," writes Lerner. No: community will either subsume the family, or the family will continue subverting community. "Kinder, Küche, Kirche"—Children, Kitchen, Church—was a Nazi rallying cry. "Flag, Faith, and Family" is a slogan advanced by a current U.S. "left" group called The New Patriot Alliance.

Lerner has proposed forming a group called Socialists and Feminists in Defense of the Family. How about In Defense of Community, and In Defense of Sodomy? It is time for gay leftists to clarify where Lerner and his like belong: firmly on the right. If women and gays follow Lerner's "pro-family approach" we will simply succeed in sabotaging feminism and gay liberation. Lerner's line is the same old crap that Stalinists, social democrats and the right have always served up. No thanks. Not this time.

I don't give a damn if John Paul II is a socialist—if he can wear dresses, I can suck rocks. Just get the Pontiff off our backs. Really, what is it with you folks?

—Scott Tucker
Philadelphia

GET THE PICTURE?

GAY ACTIVIST GREG CALVERT ASKS A good question—"Why are leftists leaping to the family's defense?" (*ITT*, Sept. 30). You provided two responses—one verbal (Michael Lerner's patronizing and confused article) and one visual—the photos you chose to accompany the dialog pieces.

These pictures reveal an unconscious heterosexism that is a form of (unintentional?) editorializing. Calvert's article is run with a photo captioned "poets Peter Orlovsky and Allen Ginsberg at a 1979 gay-rights rally in Washington, D.C." Lerner's article goes with an uncaptioned photo of (presumably) a couple and their small daughter.

So what's wrong? Lots. No paper with any real awareness of the gay movement would refer to the 1979 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights as a "gay-rights rally" like any other (how about "Rev. M.L. King at a 1963 civil rights rally in D.C."?)—this was a watershed event in the gay struggle that *ITT* paid little attention to at the time or, evidently, since.

More: if *ITT* shows a famous couple as an example (obviously) of a gay "family," why not pair it with a photo of, say, Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden as a complementary straight family. Rather, you run them next to a "family of man" style Mr. & Ms. Anonymous Straight Left Nuclear Family; just plain folks. Anonymity is appropriate to the Salt of the Earth. A photograph of some of the 100,000 people at the Washington March—linking arms, dancing—could have been used as a "family" and might have helped your readers understand why lesbians and gay men do not fit neatly into categories like the family, despite attempts by gay reformists and straight leftists to shoehorn us into that old shoe.

—Larry Gross
Editor, Studies in Visual Communication
Philadelphia, Pa.

FINALLY, WE HAVE MICHAEL!

I AM OUTRAGED AT THE CONTENTION of some women that a pro-family program is somehow anti-feminist. I have been a feminist for 12 years, and my connection with feminism grew out of my awareness that it was only changes in the economic, political and social structure that would allow me to have the kind of family life that was truly loving. It took 12 years for men to catch on, but now finally we have Michael Lerner and others talking in the same terms, and articulating a pro-family politics that is deeply feminist. He insists that "family" means the family in all its forms, including single-parent and gay families. He insists that support for families must include support for full equality of power for women both in their family life and in the larger economic structure. And he shows how the Right has cynically manipulated the family issue.

To allow some people to denounce this as "anti-feminist" is the moral equivalent of having your newspaper print quotes from agent-provocateurs saying that no demonstration is truly a "left" demonstration unless it ends up breaking windows and hurting innocent bystanders. In both cases the positions are meant to discredit feminism and discredit the "left." Frankly, if I

were a smart police agent inside the women's movement or the left, I'd be attacking anyone who came forward with ideas as smart and likely to end the left's isolation as those advanced by Michael Lerner.

—Jo Miller
San Leandro, Calif.

AND STEVE

STEVE MAX AND MICHAEL LERNER are addressing the key issues and should be congratulated. As a longtime feminist, I think it's time to support men who are finally understanding what feminism is about: that the political and economic sphere totally interpenetrate personal life. The family is where all this comes together, and Lerner's program, as described in *ITT*'s article (Sept. 30), hits the mark. If the left and feminists can show how support for our programs is really a way of making the quality of people's lives much better they will listen to us. It is precisely when we got away from making our values concrete, talking about what they actually would mean in daily life to the lived realities of people, that we began to lose our mass support. It is precisely because both socialism and feminism can help make family life and personal life more humane that I identify with those politics. By switching our focus, by reframing our focus in terms of family, while still insisting on equality of power and liberation for women, we can finally hope to talk to people who are put off by our abstract moralizing and by our esoteric economic analyses.

What really upsets me is that some women are now denouncing this move as anti-feminist. Who set them up as the judges? As one feminist with 10 years of activism in my local community, I want to say that men who start to talk about support for family life in the way that Steve Max and Michael Lerner are doing need to be encouraged and supported. Some of my sisters may be feeling that they have the copyright on "personal life" issues. But the next real advance for women will come when men too begin to understand the connections between what they really want in their personal lives and the needs to change the society to make that possible. Seeing people like Max and Lerner finally address this gives me hope that we can beat the Right.

—Myrtle Holloway
Oakland, Calif.

TITILLATING, BUT...

STEVE MAX'S ARTICLE ON "TWO-Swage households feed new right backlash in traditional families" (*ITT*, Sept. 22) is titillating and melodramatic, but it reflects too much reading of *Business Week* and *U.S. News* and not enough attention to available basic data reports.

About his "soaring divorce rate," for instance, he needs to consider the fact that since 1976 divorces per thousand population may have risen from 5.0 to 5.3, but at the same time marriages per thousand have risen more steeply from 10.0 to 10.9. Births are also up from 14.8 to 16.2. We quote the *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* of Sept. 17, 1981, issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The U.S. is becoming a more married country than ever. We make marital mistakes sometimes, but we are still sold on marriage and on children.

It is true that there are more two-wage families than ever, but the claim that this has actually raised their incomes by 40 percent needs to be re-examined in terms of the inflationary spiral.

We need not go into all the other instances in his article of his regurgitation of "in" mass media mythmaking. Perhaps the instances we note are enough to characterize his effort.

—Elizabeth Briant Lee
Alfred McClung Lee
Drew University, Madison, N.J.

READ ON

WE ARE IN RECEIPT OF THE FIRST issue of *In These Times*. Your paper will make an excellent addition to our resource center.

Speaking for myself, the sponsors, and the majority of the inmate population we serve, thank you!

Looking forward to weekly issues of *In These Times*.

—Kirk Lee Anderson Jr.
Librarian, Inmate Committee for
Higher Education, Soledad, Calif.

BY GEORGE!

I CONTINUE TO BE SURPRISED THAT your writers never mention the land tax as a means to achieve economic democracy. Equal rights among all people to the resources of this earth is what it's all about, and since it's not practical for each person to own an equally productive piece of land or an equal share of crude oil or rock phosphate, the next best way is for those who now claim those resources to pay rents or royalties to the community as a whole to pay for services such as education, health care, welfare assistance, transportation, law, research and development.

The land tax system would eliminate taxes on wages and strike directly at the heart of corporate power, which is based on the unearned income from monopoly control of land, including oil, natural gas, minerals, water, air, sunlight, radio and TV waves, geothermal energy, long-term patents, etc.

Now that Reagan has cut income taxes for the rich and service for the poor without slowing inflation, this is the best time to get state and local governments to increase taxes on land. Since inflation is caused more by continued increases in land and resource prices than by federal deficits, state and local governments have the power to control it by shifting more of their taxes on to land and off wages. Increased land taxes and reduced taxes on buildings, equipment and inventory will encourage development, including home building, which will increase jobs and get the economy rolling. Land owners generally are not able to pass the tax on to consumers.

Pennsylvania permits its cities to increase tax rates on land and Pittsburgh has since 1979 increased land taxes from 48 to 126 mills while keeping taxes on improvements at 25 mills per \$1000 taxable value. Building permits issued since the increases have gone up, despite the building depression elsewhere. Also, the oil and coal producing states such as Louisiana, Texas, Wyoming and Montana have severance taxes on resources.

I urge activists to organize immediately to get state legislation to permit local governments to increase land taxes and take on the burden of caring for the people Reagan wants to forget. For further information write Incentive Taxation, 580 W. Sixth St., Indiana, PA 15701.

—Robert P. Willis
Des Moines, Iowa

UNWANTED WRINKLE

CARICATURISTS NEED TO PICK UP ON salient characteristics to make their point; some of the characteristics are based on physically prominent aspects. Political cartoonists make symbolic use, as well, of personal aspects. Ronald Reagan as a pitcher (*ITT*, Sept. 9) with a grenade instead of a baseball in his hand makes one point very well. The prominence of his wrinkles makes a different point. It isn't his wrinkles that make Reagan a bad president, or even his age. It's his policies.

—Jeanne Adlemon-Mahoney
San Francisco

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters less than 250 words long. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

By Ernest Evans

AT A WASHINGTON, D.C., press conference on Oct. 2, 1981, Julian Bond's Institute for Southern Studies (ISS) released a report claiming that police officials and the local district attorney who later handled the case had an "intimate alliance" with the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi gunmen who killed five members of the Communist Workers Party at an anti-Klan rally in Greensboro, N.C., on Nov. 3, 1979. The six Klansmen and Nazis charged in the murders were acquitted in November 1980. The report argued that the local prosecutors and the district attorney's office were guilty of "systematically weakening the prosecution" of those accused of the murders and of allowing people who believed "it's less of a crime to kill communists" to sit on the jury.

The Institute's report indicates that, as in the civil rights struggles in the '60s, local law enforcement officials have a tendency to turn a blind eye toward violence by Klansmen and other white supremacists. In addition, in the late '70s members of the Tupelo, Miss., police department admitted to being Klan members, and in 1978 the sheriff of Marshall County, Ala., attended a Klan rally there and thanked the Klan for its support of "law and order."

Such links between local law enforcement officials and the Klan raise the specter that, as in the '60s, Klansmen and white supremacists will continue to get away with murder. Then, despite overwhelming evidence against the accused, it was impossible to get a conviction in the case of the murder of civil rights leader Medgar Evers. If the Greensboro killings reestablish this pattern, the Klan may be able to erode the civil rights gains of the '60s and pose a serious obstacle to the efforts by labor to organize in the South.

The question thus arises as to how the left should respond to the threat to its goals posed by the Klan's links with law enforcement officials in the South. The answer to this question is twofold:

A) The left should apply pressure to the Justice Department to prosecute Klansmen on federal charges in those instances when local law enforcement officials are unable or unwilling to prosecute Klansmen in the local courts. The report by the Institute for Southern Studies called for such federal prosecutions in cases like the Greensboro incident; Julian Bond stated at the press conference in Washington: "We have come to Washington today because the intimate alliance between public officials and terrorists in Greensboro demands vigorous federal scrutiny and prosecution."



Police aided Klan: Greensboro report

B) The left should insist that, in light of the Klan's proven willingness to resort to violence, the Federal Bureau of Investigation should increase its efforts to investigate the Klan.

Past action by the Justice Department and the FBI has proven effective in curbing Klan violence. In Philadelphia, Miss., in 1964 three civil rights workers were murdered by a faction of the Ku Klux Klan called the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Members of the police de-

partment in Philadelphia were accomplices in these murders. When local authorities were unable to secure convictions of those responsible for the murders, the Justice Department intervened and filed federal charges. The FBI was able to obtain sufficient evidence to send several members of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan to jail.

Given the FBI's history of abuses of civil liberties, many members of the left are deeply suspicious of the Bureau, and

consequently are skeptical of its willingness to investigate vigorously terrorism by groups on the extreme right. Some ultra-left groups—like the Communist Workers Party, which was the victim of its own provocations in the Greensboro killings—have therefore preferred direct action against the Klan. But anti-Klan rallies and demonstrations such as those of the CWP are ineffectual, because, in general, the Klan's violence is covert, and, as a secret society often with connections in local law enforcement agencies, it is usually able to escape prosecution.

In addition, public anti-Klan rallies are often a source of publicity for the Klan in areas like Ohio and Connecticut where it has little strength. The tendency of ultra-left groups is to hold rallies in such places, where it is considerably safer than it proved to be in North Carolina.

The ISS report specifically stated that the police department's "failure to be on the scene to prevent violence amounts to gross negligence and raises grave questions about their motives for such inaction."

This documented charge shows that local police frequently will be unwilling to investigate the Klan. In such cases, if there is going to be effective investigation of the Klan, it will be necessary for the FBI to undertake it, because the only way that the covert violence of a secret organization like the Klan can be dealt with is through investigations by law enforcement agencies.

The left, however, should not blow the threat of the Klan out of proportion. While it has grown somewhat in recent years, the Klan's strength today is only one-fifth of what it was in 1967. Moreover, the Klan is not a monolithic force; on the contrary, its estimated 10,000 members are divided into four major factions and several minor factions. The relations among these various factions are characterized by suspicion and hostility—rather similar to the hostility exhibited by various extreme left groups toward each other. If pressure by groups on the left is successful in forcing the Justice Department and the FBI to take firm steps against criminal activity by the various factions of the Ku Klux Klan, then there is every reason to believe that it will not pose a serious danger to civil rights.

Copies of the Institute for Southern Studies report are available by sending a check for \$3 to Institute for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. Ask for the Third of November report.

Ernest Evans is an assistant professor in the Politics Department at Catholic University. He is a member of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee.

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ROBERTA LYNCH

The unions need structural change

LABOR DAY, 1981, FOUND the American labor movement in the throes of greater turmoil than it has known at almost any moment in the last two decades.

At center stage was the PATCO strike—a situation tailor-made for exploitation by an anti-labor national administration. And exploit Ronald Reagan did—seeking to destroy the union while misshaping public opinion.

Underlying this dramatic confrontation is an even more stark reality: Recently released Department of Labor figures indicate that union membership declined by some 500,000 between 1978 and 1980. Organized labor's share of the workforce dropped from 22.3 percent to 20.9 percent. Not surprisingly, the unions that lost members were concentrated in the basic industries that have been hard-hit by plant closings and layoffs.

This lack of growth is coupled with a lack of internal coherence that makes it difficult for the AFL-CIO to function as a confederation or for individual unions to lead their own members.

These developments seem all the more disturbing when viewed in the light of our current economic and political climate. Corporate attacks on the very existence of labor unions are increasing. High-priced union-busting firms armed with an array of legal technicalities, public relations plots and psychological scams are routinely used to halt organizing drives, to break strikes or to spark decertification campaigns. And even companies with long-established and seemingly strong unions are becoming more blatant in their demands for "give backs" and more flagrant in their violations of contract provisions. Corporations have, in effect, declared open season on the labor movement and they are using some very high-powered weaponry.

Now this corporate offensive is being augmented by governmental policy. In a recent article in *Nation's Business*, conservative columnist James Kilpatrick nearly sums up the "labor reform" policies that influence the current administration: 1) eliminating the Davis-Bacon Act; 2) amending the Hobbs Act; 3) prohibiting all union shops.



That same issue of *Nation's Business* contains a piece on Thorne Auchter, the head of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, assuring business that he wants to turn OSHA around to help employers. And in point of fact, Auchter has been so diligent in his attempts to undermine safety and health protections for the nation's working men and women that even the agency's staunchest conservative critics in Congress say they no longer feel the need to weaken it legislatively.

Such approaches are sanctioned by a subservient press that is largely hostile to organized labor. The *Chicago Tribune's* Labor Day editorial is sadly typical in this

respect. After a few guarded words of praise for American labor's failure to develop its own political presence, it got to the meat of the matter: "Today few if any American workers can be said to be exploited. Unions are no longer instruments of humanitarianism, they are special interest groups like any other. If there is exploiting, it is more likely in reverse. Through euphemisms like 'prevailing wage' and 'fair labor standards' powerful unions have prevailed upon accommodating legislators to grant a stream of special benefits and special exemptions, usually at the expense of the taxpayers or the general public."

We are witnessing the unfolding of a new stage of labor history. For the past 20 years unions have felt relatively secure about their place in American society. Labor leaders played golf with presidents and sat on councils with corporate executives, believing they were partners with management and government in furthering social and economic progress.

Now it is becoming clear how fragile that integration was. Unions are beginning to learn how quickly they can be removed from the corridors of national power, how readily their cooperation was taken for acquiescence, how close at hand are the baseball bat and the injunction—or their current equivalents.

The issue today is how to respond to these changing conditions—whether the labor movement can acknowledge its status as counter-institution and draw on its own rich traditions to redefine its functions and posture.

There are no easy or quick answers. Solidarity Day is enormously important, not so much as a solitary action, but as a declaration of intent. It indicates a recog-

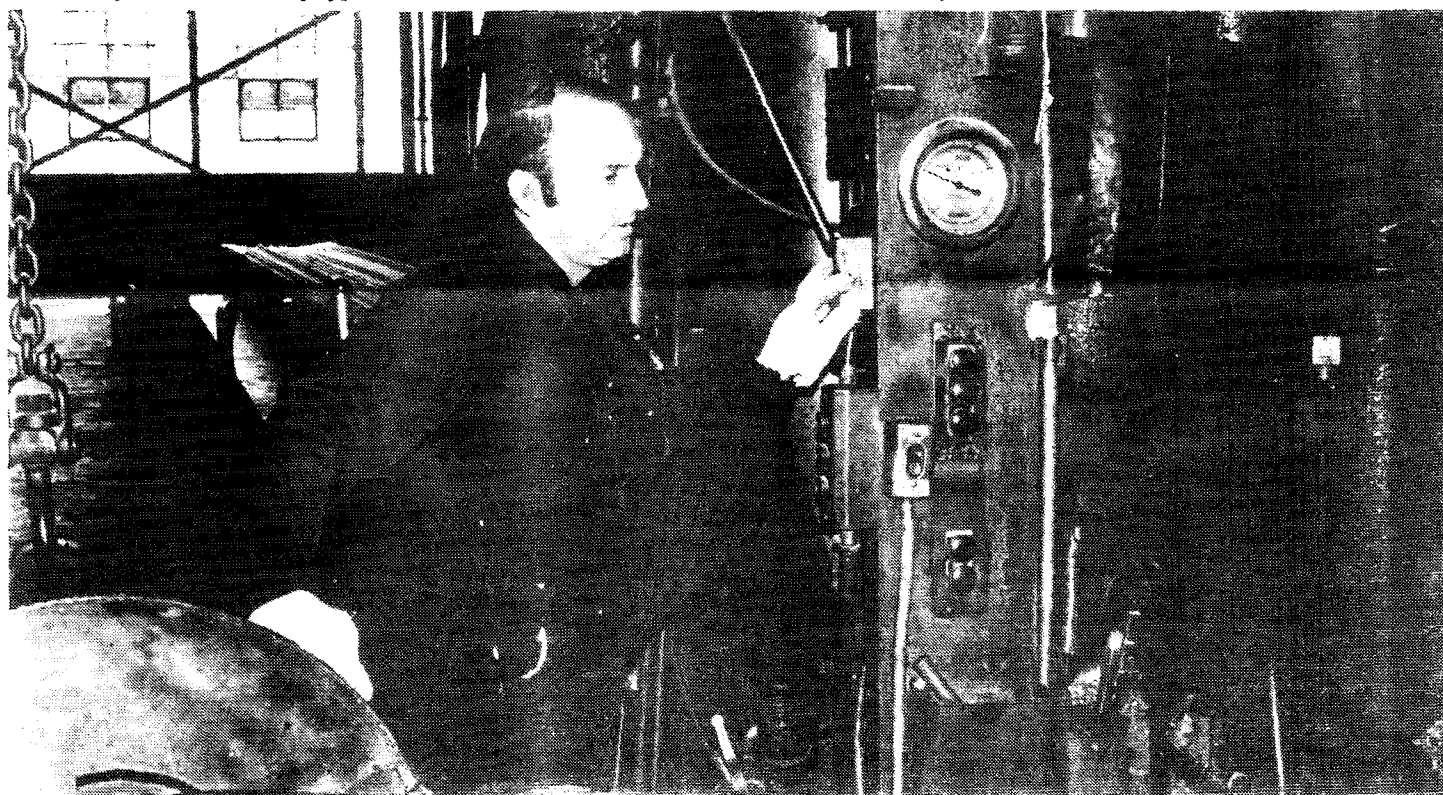
union members, the difference among them, how they experience themselves, their work, their unions, their world.

Nor is leadership the fundamental issue. With the exception of great and rare men and women, leaders are just a certain breed of follower. Ultimately, they respond to the pressures exerted on them. This is not to say that narrow and inflexible leaders are not a serious barrier to change. There is no doubt that the threat of retribution in a few unions and the weight of bureaucracy of many more can stifle initiatives. Not is it to say that new forms of leadership are not essential. In fact, the emergence of more outspoken and dynamic leadership in recent years has been of great importance to the labor movement.

But in the final analysis, the entire blame for labor's problems today cannot be laid at the feet of its leadership, any more than the hope for the future can be placed entirely in their hands. The basic problem is far more complex.

As the American labor movement confronts the difficult challenges of a new era, four elements, internal revitalization, expansion/consolidation, public relations and political action, have begun to emerge as essential aspects of a process of transformation.

Internal Revitalization. To many people the notion of revitalizing the labor movement is synonymous with democratizing the labor movement. But this is only a partial truth. Parts of the labor movement are already among our society's most democratic institutions. But democratic procedures do not guarantee an active and informed membership. Democracy is the cornerstone without which little else is possible. But it is not enough to



Steve Cagan



inition that the battle cannot be fought solely on the old terms and a willingness to seek out new ones.

Also encouraging is the increasing interest in mergers on the part of many unions, as well as the growing use of coordinating bargaining and other forms of intra-labor cooperation.

Moreover, the new openness of the labor movement toward alliance with other left forces and the related willingness to speak out on issues not specific to labor give further cause for optimism.

Beneath the surface.

However, the process of transformation will need to go much deeper and will require great creativity and commitment.

Ironically, those on the left who simply call for greater militancy against the bosses or condemn the labor hierarchy for misleadership may be as remote from what is needed as those within the labor movement who uncritically defend the status quo.

Militancy is not a matter of trumpet calls to action. It is a matter of the understanding of millions of individual workers of their own situations, of their perceptions of the possible. Far too often workers are viewed through the prism of one or another ideology without regard for the actual conditions of their lives. Central to any movement for regeneration is a renewed effort to look clearly at those lives—at the varied forces acting on

The leaders are not the issue; they are a breed of followers.

keep polishing that stone once it is in place. Other blocks are needed to make a real structure.

Internal revitalization flows from the recognition of union as counter-institution. It is also based on the realization that union members invariably lead multi-dimensional lives. They are property owners and taxpayers. They are members of the VFW, the NRA, the NOW, the PTA. They are mothers of toddlers and fathers of teenagers. All of these experiences act on them, in effect, in competition for their time, their energy, their self-identification. Moreover, union members exist in a world of mass media that largely ignore or subtly derigate unions, manual labor and working people themselves.

All of this suggests the need for a culture of labor that would aggressively compete for union members' allegiances. In some cases this would require integrating other life experiences. In other in-

Continued on page 18

ART & ENTERTAINMENT

DOCUMENTARY

An ethical twilight zone in film



The Palestinians are portrayed simply as victims.

By Saul Landau

Barbed wire, prisoners behind it. Palestinians, victims—you can tell by the music. Then the jailers, Israelis. Jewish soldiers occupy ancient Palestinian lands, and Jews drive bulldozers over Palestinian fields and homes and erect modern high-rises, new settlements. That is the opening of *Occupied Pales-*

tine. And for 86 minutes that theme is repeated from the Palestinian point of view.

Witnesses testify on camera to Israeli atrocities, or Zionists justify expansion into Arab land and the exclusion of Palestinians from *eretz Israel*. The witnesses are nameless, but many. Old women in black describe Israelis raping Palestinian girls, murdering, massacring, pillaging. Israeli soldiers, unnamed and unseen, are quoted on the screen to back up the charges. And the bulldozers move on, the Jewish police with their night sticks and shields, watch, scrutinize, stalk and search Arabs, all suspects. The Arabs are a humble and cheap labor force and a peasantry tied to villages, with women fetching water—primitive people. The Israelis are modern, equipped, brutal. We hardly see them at work except for police work and construction at the Arab's expense.

Israeli youths are shown at a new settlement. They sing to torch light, reminiscent of Nazi rites. "Hatikva" takes on a military tone. The film wastes little time establishing the cause for the brutality it has shown: Zionism. Quotes from the old Zionist theorists and from the modern exponents of expansionist Zionism explain, justify, exhort. The Jewish homeland must be for the Jews, and it must expand. This ideology, the film suggests, was hatched over a century ago and developed through the modern times, backed by large Western capital interests and imperialism. And the Israelis have carried

out this plan, at the expense of the long-term residents of Palestine, bulldozing their homes, stealing their land, denying them their human rights. Progress becomes identified with evil and oppression, while the humble is equated with the good, albeit that is not necessarily the intention of the filmmaker. The symbols of progress, the bulldozer, the modern weapons of oppression, the high-rise and the irrigated fields, contrast with the simple, the humble, the primitive.

Then the film leaves the Middle East and cuts to a fundraiser for the Israeli war bonds in New York City. "The brassiere business must have been good last year," says a slimy emcee, "Manny is giving \$25,000." The scene cuts to a fat Jewish woman slurping a sundae at a Tel Aviv outdoor cafe. Intercutting between scenes from the decadent banquet in New York—and we don't know when—and conspicuous consumption in Israel. Big U.S. bucks going to finance the plush life in *eretz Israel*.

Palestinian resistance to Israeli oppression appears toward the end of the film—a logical sequence after almost an hour of horror-story testimony by a variety of witnesses. These actors' faces are strong, but we are not given their names or other identities, nor are the interviews dated. But the buildup of testimony and action more than justifies the demonstrations. Action escalates. Tear gas is shot at the demonstrators who can reply only with rocks. What year? The filmmaker doesn't care, because the victimization and the victims, he believes, are part of a generic process, and the year doesn't matter nor do the names of the victims. One year's footage merges with another's, and network news footage with the material shot by the filmmaker.

The filmmaker shows that the Palestinians deserve sympathy, the Israelis, condemnation. A classical propaganda film, according to Webster: "Ideas, facts or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause." That doesn't make the film bad per se; it does, however, bring it into a kind of ethical twilight zone in the craft of documentary film, as it does not state at any point in the film what its intentions are. It shows simply the good guys, Palestinians, versus the bad guys, Israelis.

The most serious problem with the film aesthetically is that it lacks the qualities that would give it credibility. It contains neither irony nor humor. It possesses no time frame, no context, in history or in geography. A bitter, dark haired, articulate woman appears on screen at the end of the film and reiterates in more subtle language the charges made by the humble Arabs. She could be a PLO spokeswoman. She is an Israeli. But she is not identified in the film. The filmmaker told us who she was afterwards and thought her identity made no difference. Nor did he

think the mixing of riots and demonstrations from various unlabeled years made any difference.

The film contains no notion of why the Jewish state, both as idea and reality, had drawn so much support, not only from imperialist powers but from socialists and humanitarians. If Zionism as an idea was so reactionary, why was initial support for it so widespread among leftists? Why did the Soviet Union,

large numbers of Israelis and non-Israeli Jews have begun, not only to question, but to attack official Israeli policy.

An articulate, unidentified man speaks about the "military operations" mounted to free Palestinian prisoners, referring to the attacks on Kiryat Shmona and other settlements in which women and children were killed. No question from the filmmaker about definitions of "military," no probes or elicitation of counterpoint of any kind.

The problem is not that the filmmaker has selected some footage rather than other footage, or that he has neglected details, or even whole aspects of the Palestinian situation. All that is in the realm of conscious style to which any filmmaker is entitled since the craft itself is one of trickery, of creating illusion, of combining sight with sound to produce certain effects. The question is, what effects are produced, and toward what consciousness? This question be-



Israeli soldiers are shown as Zionist brutalizers, but there is no indication of opposition to this role from within Israel.

and not the United States, arm the Israelis in their liberation war against England? The film contains no inkling of six million dead Jews, Nazi victims in World War II, of the painful evolution of Israel from one kind of a nation into another, of, in a word, the dialectic of politics.

Why, I asked myself, didn't the filmmaker probe Israeli soldiers for answers the Palestinians would surely like to know: "What do you feel when you go home after occupying territory all day? Did you feel badly after you beat, shot, clubbed the young Arab demonstrator? Do you beat your own wife, your kids?" At one point, Amos Kenan, the Israeli writer, is quoted in the film to back up a charge against Israel. The filmmaker cited Kenan. Why not interview Kenan? He would have told why he refused to obey an order during occupation duty in the 1960s. (Kenan struck his commanding officer after being ordered to destroy an Arab home). A rich resource unexploited—the point being that

comes even more pointed in an overtly political documentary purporting to show the reality.

Without developing a historical dialectic that allows space for resolution in the future, *Occupied Palestine* can only pose a conflict between absolutes: justice and injustice, impotence and omnipotence. The just in this film, however, are also the backward and powerless, victims who throw rocks, who are easily jailed, whose pledge to resist forever is heroic but not backed by material assets—as the film shows it. The victimizers, on the other hand, are heavily armed, brutal and very modern. If Israel indeed possesses all the means of oppression, and production, they are by the old-fashioned Marxist definition, the progressive force. The Palestinians have only faith that justice will be done, their land returned, but aside from divine intervention, the film shows no viable means for achieving the just. Liberals might be moved to send a care package and hope for a less brutal treatment of Palestinians in the future. The Palestinians as



For 86 minutes that theme is repeated from the Palestinian point of view.

shown in the film have no visible opening to the enemy, no way to prevent Israel from continuing the process of genocide, apparently unopposed by its own citizens.

So the very film method chosen to build emotional sympathy for the Palestinians works against political reflection. Luckily for the Palestinians and those Israelis who retain their dedication to justice and self-determination, the issue is far more complex, and the enemy less powerful than the film portrays.

The real fault of the film, then, lies in the simplicity of the method chosen by the filmmaker. To the extent that he does not include the possibilities of a solution through divisions inside of a Jewish Israel, through a breakdown of support throughout the Jewish community internationally, to the extent the East-West questions are ignored, he reduces a many-sided political issue to the flat plane of passion. And by simplifying in order to evoke sympathy the filmmaker can achieve no more than simple responses. The film appeals to the gut only, to compassion with "the poor Palestinians," and not to the brain, which asks, "how can this situation be justly resolved?"

Simplicity in the cause of complex justice may evoke sympathy, but hardly the kind of action needed to redress the situation. *Occupied Palestine* does show how some, or most, Palestinians must see the world, through the narrow and brutal prism of misery imposed upon them by Israeli occupation. The anonymous faces are powerful witnesses, but their combined testimony is not the reality.

I became angry watching this film, not only at the film's deficiencies, but at the true images of Israeli soldiers and police, men with whom I would have shared a gas chamber had we lived together in Europe 40 years ago. I do not, therefore, like to see them, on TV or in movies, wielding clubs, beating young Arab demonstrators. These un-military, ungainly, unshaven, stoop soldiered Jews acted like cops and occupiers everywhere.

The simple-minded view of Israelis angered me, but so did the Jewish cops and occupiers.

But the filmmaker never approached them to see if they were vulnerable, to see if there was an opening, a weakness behind their brutality. After all, Jewish history is about sensitivity, about pain and suffering, about survival as a people, and it may outrage many Jews to see their people behaving like brutes. Maybe those who missed the brutal scenes on TV should see this film. Or should they? Hopefully, someone with a larger sensibility will treat this subject in the complex and sensitive manner that it demands, one which shows the way for a Palestinian homeland without the extinction of Israel.

Saul Landau is a filmmaker and senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.



The steadfast wife (Beata Tyzkiewicz) comforts the visiting relative (Leslie Caron) in Krzysztof Zanussi's *CONTRACT*.

SATIRE

The Poles have an answer to Robert Altman

By Pat Aufderheide

Any film by Krzysztof Zanussi is likely to attract attention these days. He was one of the first film directors in Poland to insist on addressing current issues and he has made some of Poland's most thoughtful films (including *Illumination*, *Camouflage* and *The Constant Factor*, all shown in recent years at the New York Film Festival). A veteran in the Polish film industry, he now is a spokesperson for Solidarity in film production. A prize-winning socialist filmmaker, he was chosen by the Vatican to make the Pope's film biography (*From a Far Country*).

But his satire *The Contract* (New Yorker Films) is so much fun to watch that you don't care who he is. In fact you can easily get so enthralled by plot twists, the sharply-etched characters and the rich family madness that you let the social criticism sting at one remove, on recollection.

Not, however, if you're Polish. In Poland people have lined up more patiently to see the film than they did for meat, and everyone got the references. In fact, Zanussi's only regret, he said two weeks ago at the New York Film Festival, is that he didn't release the film six months earlier. Shown just after Solidarity broke long official silence on political discontent, it was, he claimed, "much less courageous when it was shown than when it was made." Courage may not be the question, so much as perception. And this it has in abundance.

The Contract is Zanussi's answer to Robert Altman's *A Wedding*. When he saw it at an international film festival he objected to the dismissive, jarring humor

and superficiality of social comment in the film, which he also admitted to being "powerfully affected" by. *The Contract* has the same general plot line—a family wedding goes increasingly awry, while the pleasant, well-heeled hosts blandly try to gloss over the contradictions. But the tone is never flip, although the scenes get outrageous.

A young couple decides to marry—he for the hope of landing an apartment, she for religious reasons. They stumble grumpily through the state ceremony, with new in-laws meeting warily and the groom's mother frigidly pushing off the advances of her ex's new wife. The real trouble starts during the church wedding when the bride, revolted less by her husband's steady drinking than by his sudden cop-out (he has greedily accepted his father's offer to wangle an apartment with under-the-table methods) and by the affluent atmosphere, flees the church on the brink of saying "I do." The party, however, goes on, and the guests go from decadent to more so to most of all in a day-long party that ends with a sleigh ride and return to the sight of the house in flames.

Zanussi's coda ending, showing two women caring for their errant men and making life go on through their strength-giving faith, is a sober counterpoint to the movie's levelling mad humor.

Passion and science.

Zanussi, a self-described "failed scientist" (he first studied physics), says he sees research scientists as priests of the unknown. Also a from-both-heart-and-mind Catholic, he has a devastating combination of spiritual passion and careful observation.

Zanussi is appalled by the breaches of contract in modern Polish society. The incomplete wedding, taking the lid off other sordid breaches of contract in the society-family, is a perfect vehicle for his concern. He points to the bad faith of couples in marriages and of couples who live together without being able to decide whether to get married; to the tenuous relationship between parents and children, often hinging on the ability to buy or "arrange" the talismans of privilege; the corruption that riddles the tie between the State and the people; the sophistry of Church leaders (exemplified by one oily priest) who serve immediate needs but not spiritual wounds.

It's not simply that contracts have not been honored that bothers Zanussi. "I see people making contracts instead of having relationships," he said. "But a contract, even when it works, can only occur on one level."

His heroines—there are no heroes in this story—are the women who keep faith, who have integrity. The young one is sternly, loudly truthful and stubbornly independent. The other, a traditional housewife, is a silent sufferer and manager (to watch her transform debacle after social debacle into a party again is to watch a kind of miracle). Both are capable of love even within a corruption-riddled social world because they are true to themselves.

In case you were in any doubt about the importance of the spiritual in this tale, the end clinches it. The two women, out for a dispirited walk in the woods, come upon a deer and are awed. Zanussi makes reference here to the image of the deer with a crucifix between its antlers seen by a saint. The end may be, for many of us, evidence that a person who can expertly diagnose a problem doesn't necessarily have the cure.

On the other hand the ending, shifting modes as dramatically as it does, underscores the fact that Zanussi is making a fundamental social criticism, not merely poking fun at the bad manners of a privileged group. The film can be read as a critical comment on the failure of a Communist state. But more generally it indicates the sterility and lack of a moral context for relationships in modern industrial and secular

societies. It is antimodern in a general sense. Increased democracy through Solidarity may correct the abuses he hilariously exposes. But there may not be a secular cure—and certainly not in his opinion—for all the empty spaces he finds in secular culture.

Technically, Zanussi is dazzling. The film pirouettes through elaborately complicated crowd scenes, and the plot both cues us into emerging conflicts and gives us the same overlapping levels of action that Altman is famous for. The success of the technique is in the fact that this always seems like a real family, not just a social construct on which to hang one's favorite anti-fat cat complaints.

Zanussi's talent becomes even more impressive when you realize that, to save money, he used a film process requiring him to use only one take per scene.

Self-criticism.

Zanussi is aware that his criticisms come close to home. "I'm asking myself the same questions as I ask in the film," he said. "I belong to that group of people who are privileged, yes."

His different roles in Polish society sometimes conflict. Solidarity has opened up new possibilities for filmmakers, he said, but it has also made some aspects of filmmaking more difficult. Many crew members have obligations to attend meetings as Solidarity members as well. And some of those hard-won rights get used. For instance, Solidarity workers struck on the filming of *The Contract*. "And since I am a Solidarity representative and I have had overseas experience," Zanussi said, "my own crew came to me and asked me how to go on strike, since no one knew. I had to tell them."

This film, made before Solidarity won representation, was not censored. Far from it—it was shot according to a script that was also published as a book. Why did the government permit such open criticism?

"Probably because the official concerned, who is like many people in the film, wanted to show he's not like them and he let the film be made. After the Solidarity movement began he was denounced as a crook."

"He's in jail now," said Zanussi with the same ironic smile that set the tone for *The Contract*.

Unions

Continued from page 15

stances, it might involve challenging them.

For instance, integrating family concerns becomes of growing importance as more and more women enter the labor force. Today the children of union members often grow up with no more than a nodding acquaintance with the meaning of unionism and with little appreciation for the work their parents do.

A program of child care during union meetings and events could not only be a means of freeing up more parents to participate, but could also provide an ongoing opportunity to develop programs for their children that fostered a sense of pride in their parent's work and activities.

Also vital are cultural and educational programs for adults that can unearth worker's history and experiences and challenge the dominant cultural values. The Bread and Roses program of District 1199 is an excellent example of such an effort. As are two plays—one produced by SEIU about the daily reality of hospital workers; the other a presentation of the life of Karen Silkwood—that provide invigorating alternatives to the contemporary ignorance of working people's lives.

Such efforts need to be extended and institutionalized at the local union level. Local educational programs, for example, are still largely matters of union officials or highly motivated members taking courses at area colleges. Very few unions have attempted to develop ongoing programs at the union hall or meeting place that could attempt to involve more of the members in learning about their own history, about the hazards they face everyday on the job or about wider political and cultural topics.

Such an approach would also seek to expand the union's involvement with what goes on in the job. In the past many unions have consciously restricted their concerns, fearful of violating unwritten understandings of management prerogatives. Today as they face the introduction of new technologies, the discovery of new health hazards, the new dilemmas posed by massive industrial exodus, more and more unions are realizing that they have to broaden their scope.

This expanded involvement is essential to beginning to retain some control of the work process and restoring to workers a collective knowledge of their jobs and a sense of greater power over their lives. It cannot be relegated to labor-management committees that sometimes bypass the union altogether and are largely oriented toward meeting management concerns. Rather it has to seek to develop and strengthen the union as the institution through which workers identify their concerns and work to achieve them.

Expansion/Consolidation. These two terms may seem contradictory, but I have linked them in this way because I think they are complementary.

Expansion refers to the urgent task of organizing new members. Sadly, there are still many unions that do not have significant budgets for organizing, that rely on outmoded techniques or that barely undertake the effort.

Expansion is important both as a means of increasing the size and influence of the labor movement, and as a means of breathing new life into its ranks. As more and more women and racial minorities enter the unions and begin to take a role in shaping policy, it is likely that the goals and image of the union movement will change as well.

But such expansion will not take place unless there is an increased financial commitment on the part of more unions, a willingness to take risks—to invest in campaigns that may take years to bear fruit and the development of new tactics—such as those used in the J.P. Stevens campaign—to complement traditional organizing approaches.

Labor educator William Edelman recently referred to the "balkanization" of the American labor movement to describe the tendency of each union (or various sub-groups of unions) to act only when it suits their own interests. Consolidation requires not just mergers among unions, but a far greater willingness to develop strategies for cooperation and coordination.

As unions confront corporate mergers and the greater internationalization of the production process, the necessity for cooperation both within and across our national borders becomes all the more clear. Solidarity—viewed by some as a dream of the past or a vision of the future—is in fact the practical demand of the present.

Public Relations. To some people public relations means only trying to seem what you're not. But it can just as easily mean trying to project what you are. And it is this brand of PR that the labor movement needs today. For the reality is that the labor movement will not be an accepted fact of life of corporate capitalism, but must rather consistently assert its right to exist and seek to build widespread support for its goals. In order to survive and grow, it will need support—whether in the visible forms of alliances with other forces or in the less tangible but no less important quotient of public goodwill. Public relations is the means of garnering such support. Some examples—both existing and potential—follow.

The women office workers movement has done a brilliant job of using the media to shape public perceptions. Once secretaries were the invisible glue of our nation's business—often invisible to each other. Today there is a growing recognition of the vast legions of women (primarily) who hold corporate organizations together and are the majority workforce of major institutions, such as banks, insurance companies and universities, and of the problems of underpay, stunted opportunity and disrespect that these people encounter. The public relations effort of the working women's organizations has helped to lay the groundwork for unionization campaigns among clerical workers, as well as to create a supportive

public environment for their concerns.

In a different vein, unions could seek to publicize their own priorities while also providing a public service to the wider community. For instance, a Campaign Against Cancer. It is now widely accepted that many cancers are environmentally-related and more and more studies are indicating specific occupational causality in many cases. A consortium of unions whose members work with cancer-causing substances could undertake a major program of public education about the causes of cancer and how to reduce the risks—with a central emphasis on occupational hazards. Such a campaign could act as a source of pressure to get companies to clean up the offending substances. It could alert other workers not in unions to the dangers they face on the job. And it could educate the public who might encounter hazardous substances in other situations. Such a role could be particularly vital now that the federal government is seeking to stifle the release of public information on cancer-causing substances.

Another type of public relations effort could involve dealing with corruption within the labor movement. While distorted media coverage has made this problem appear far more widespread than it actually is, such practices do exist. The present tendency simply to ignore or deny the problem only serves to lower public confidence in unions. A vigorous public stance against corruption—combined with well-publicized internal standards and a willingness to criticize those who fail to adhere to them—could help alter labor's public image.

Political Action. This topic merits an article of its own. The problem is twofold. First, that the labor movement has not developed and propagated a coherent political program that could represent the interests of working people. Its approach tends to be fragmentary, stop-gap and narrow. It does not appear—even to most of its own members—to be able to do much more than echo mainstream Democratic politicians.

Second, the labor movement has failed to organize itself to exercise political power. Most politicians view it as another special interest group—one from which

they can get contributions and occasional personnel in exchange for the right vote on narrowly-defined "labor" issues. Even in areas of labor strength, it seldom takes risks, supporting lackluster incumbents over progressive challengers. It does not actively develop its own candidates, and is increasingly unable to deliver the votes for candidates it does support.

Several unions, such as the IAM and the AFGE, are beginning to develop new approaches to political action. Such programs—oriented toward educating and activating local union members—are essential.

However, there is also an urgent need for a broader approach—at least within the left sectors of the labor movement—to begin to develop a coherent political program and new forms of political activity. For in order for local union members to believe in the possibilities of politics, they will need to feel themselves a part of a larger movement that offers a new sense of direction and that seems capable of impacting on the political process.

The future.

One thing is certain—the labor movement will change and it will survive. For whatever the combined forces of corporations, government and media tell people; their own expertise will continue to tell them something else. Everyday in large and small ways union members continue to assert their identity and their integrity as working people. And everyday people come to the realization that they cannot stand alone against the power of their employer.

A friend recently told me of a union organizing drive she's working on with a small group of public employees. Ninety workers in a Midwestern county where the largest city has fewer than 30,000 people. The commissioners are all Republicans—and so are many of the workers. Hardly another union in sight. But the salaries average less than \$4.50 an hour and the raises are few and far between.

"Every time we get together one or the other of them tells me how they don't believe in unions," my friend says. "And everytime they all come back and keep working together to get a union."

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CHICAGO, IL

October 22-25

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NEW YORK, NY

October 23

MARHO will present two films banned by OSHA: "Worker to Worker" and "Can't Take It No More." Commentary by a speaker from NY-COSH will follow. \$3.00 admission. At John Jay College, 445 W. 59th St., at 7:30 p.m.

October 24

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November 8

Support the Polish workers! Join labor, anti-war and social activists in an afternoon in solidarity with Solidarity. Speakers include Pete Camarata, Barbara Garson, Michael Harrington, C.L.R. James, Joanne Landy, Sam Meyers, Grace Paley, I.F. Stone and Paul Sweezy. Reception and entertainment. Washington Irving High School, 40 Irving Pl., New York, N.Y. 2-6 p.m. \$2.50 contribution.

For further information or advance tickets write S.S.C., 99 State St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Make checks payable to Solidarity Support Campaign.

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October 30-November 1

Rural Corporate Accountability Research Workshops. Skills training in corporate research relating to local organizing efforts. Registration: \$25 Rural America members, \$40 non-members. Information: Rural America Midwest, 550 11th St., Des Moines, IA 50309. (515) 244-5671.

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November 6-8

Nukewatch conference on campus militarism, with Helen Caldicott, Rebekah Ray, Marion Anderson, Ada Sanchez, more. Co-sponsored by Wisconsin Peace Convention Project. For full brochure & info write: Nukewatch, 315 W. Gorham, Madison, WI 53703, or call (608) 256-4146.

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

November 9-13

The Citizen Heritage Center will sponsor "Reclaiming Our Culture and History," an intensive five-day session on use of cultural and historical resources in effective citizen action. Registration is limited to 25, on a first-come basis. Contact: Citizen Heritage Center, 2001 University Ave., S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414. (612) 623-1800.

DAVIS, CA

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"Building the New Student Movement: Issues and Strategies for the '80s." A conference presented by Students for Economic Democracy, featuring Gloria Steinem, Howard Zinn, Tom Hayden, and Kirkpatrick Sale. \$10 pre-registration, \$15 at door. Mail to: SED, 2021 Adonis Way, Carmichael, CA 95825. For more information: Tessa Rouverol, (415) 540-7405.



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Graffiti

Continued from page 20

snub us, but they can't." Her friend and co-artist, Lenny, or "Futura 2000," agrees. "It's an answer-back to our overcrowded environment, lacking heat, hot water and money."

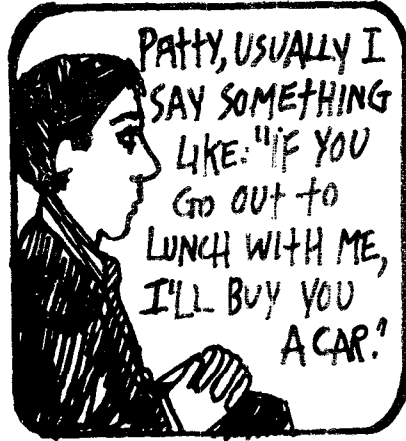
Like other novices, or "toys," Pink learned graffiti techniques through a kind of apprenticeship. "First I began tagging up insides of trains (writing initials), learning from David's partner, Ray. Then I met Seen and Doze in [Manhattan's] High School of Art and Design who taught me piecing and colors."

Piece books, six or 11-inch artists' notebooks, are carried around by graffiti writers to practice and invent new lettering and designs. These mini-designs are then transferred onto larger surfaces using a variety of markers, spray-paint colors and nozzles. Nozzles differ. For instance, "skinny caps" are used to paint thin lines when outlining a piece. Holding a can upside down emits less paint so a thinner line can be painted.

A toy only a year ago, Pink considers herself an "artist" today, someone who can "create 'masterpieces' or 'burners' on the outsides of cars that require talent and skill."

Despite a chorus of disapproval from parents and peers, she formed her own female graffiti crew, "LOTA," or "Ladies of the Arts," last November, with young women from all parts of the city. Most of the writers are 15 or 16 years old, and the subway names of its mainstay crew members are "Lady

SYLVIA



Pink, "Lady Heart," "Lady She II," "Lady Lyndah," "Lady Red," "Lady Ahnk," and "Ladi Lali" (Pink's sister). Nine others join the crew occasionally or are waiting to become regulars.

Pink and her male friend Paze also head "Top Quality," a crew that includes both experienced male and female writers.

In the past year, several artists, including Pink and Futura, have had works based on their graffiti exhibited at various New York galleries, including the avant-garde New Museum. As a result, Pink sold an eight-by-four-foot piece, comprised of orchids and lilacs, for \$500. Soon, Pink's parents' feelings about graffiti were changing rapidly: "My mom saw the shows and the *dinero* [money] coming in and was proud of me. My stepfather bought me a drafting table and built me shelves to store paint," she observes.

Pink also took part in two shows at the Mudd Club, a New York rock club, in March and April, and at the Contem-

porary Arts Center and Optima Studios in New Orleans in mid-April. She has been commissioned to do a mural for \$600 in mid-May and will be the leading actress in a planned graffiti film.

Fred, another writer who has exhibited in museums, says there are important distinctions between graffiti and graffiti-based art.

"Graffiti is only when you do it illegally, on the outside of a building, street or subway," he explains. "Graffiti on canvas is not graffiti because it's not illegal, but rooted and inspired by graffiti. It's done without the worry of being shot at with salt guns or attacked by dogs," he concludes.

"Both types of graffiti, on trains and canvas, have their own energy," adds Lady Heart. "With trains your colors have to be ready, the lighting's bad and your fingers freeze in winter. Graffiti on canvas is more relaxing and creative, with less physical stress."

There are also definite differences between male and female styles, according

to graffiti writers here. Males tend to reflect the style of their parts of New York. Manhattan boys are known for their "wild" or barely readable graffiti. Brooklyn boys are known for their "flamboyant" style. Girls use an elaborate script in bright colors; boys write in darker shades.

Pink herself often paints pink, mauve and purple flowers and butterflies with a fluid airbrush quality. Lady Heart paints landscapes, trees and people in vibrant shades.

Last spring Pink took classes in basic architecture, three-dimensional modeling and commercial art illustration at the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan. She wasn't altogether pleased with the experience.

"In school they clone you, and if you don't do it their way, you fail," she complains. "I got used to making huge pieces in colors I chose, wherever I wanted. Graffiti is a freer art form that expresses everything I want to."

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NEW YORK

AT FIRST, PINK—A 17-YEAR-old from Queens—had a hard time convincing experienced graffiti writers to take her along on their forays into the train yards. “You’ll slow us down, you’ll scream, you’re a girl!” they’d complain.

Her mother wasn’t exactly enthusiastic about the idea either: “Go and buy dresses like your sister,” she ordered. “Act like a lady.”

But Pink learned to talk and walk, or “ditty bop,” like a guy, tucked her braids into her beanie and even wore Vaseline on her face to protect it from spray paint. And now her work can be found in New York’s art museums, as well as on the subway cars that have become the personalized canvasses of its underground culture.

Like Pink, many New York graffiti writers are Hispanic, but few are female.

Her real name is Sandra, and she lives in working-class Astoria, which is populated by a mix of Greeks, Italians, Chinese and Hindus, other Latinos and blacks. Pink’s stepfather is a chemical plant worker and her mother is a seamstress; together they earn about \$30,000 a year—enough to keep the family in a private house rather than one of the neighborhood projects or apartment houses.

For a while Pink heard rumors that she was “six feet tall, black and a butch.” In fact, she’s five-foot-two and weighs about 100 pounds. Wearing a “Think Pink” sweatshirt stamped with a Pink Panther, she has wavy black hair, freckles and a broad smile.

Pink’s initial desire was to gain attention from others when her former boy-

friend, David, or “Koke,” was shipped off to Puerto Rico by his mother. Graffiti writing helped her “to forget the pain and agony of seeing him go,” she says. Her way of going about it, however, was unconventional: She joined an all-male crew of graffiti writers.

In addition to her personal motives, Pink says she took up her art because “graffiti means ‘I’m here.’ . . . People think ghetto children should be seen and not heard, that we’re supposed to be born and die in the ghetto. They want to

Continued on page 19

By Marilyn Mizrahi